

Health Literacy best practices

Ideas for improving success with good health literacy skills

4 ways you can help improve the health literacy of those around you



1. Who does your information come from?

Friends and coworkers give me health advice. But I don't know what to believe sometimes!

People get their information from so many places... **how do I know what to take seriously?**

Well, I always ask... **WHO** said this? And does their info have a reliable source?

Questions like:

Who published the information? And what are the author's credentials?

Who reviewed the information before it was published?

Part of health literacy is the ability to assess the quality of information before using it to make health-related decisions.

Share brief tips for vetting health information in all interactions: with family, friends, patients, and the public.

► **Who published the information? What are the author's credentials?**

Find reliable sources. Government agencies, medical schools or research institutions, non-profit organizations, and healthcare professionals are generally considered reliable sources.

Find the original source. Online sources should be clear about the original sources of the information they publish.

What are their qualifications? Consider what qualifies an author, or a person quoted in a source of information, to speak with authority on the topic. Are they a doctor, professor, or established expert in their field?

How are they motivated? If the information is from a for-profit company, keep in mind that what they say may be influenced by the intention to sell a product.

► **Who reviewed the information before it was published? If the answer is "probably no one", move on to other sources of information.**

Look at peer-reviewed articles if possible. "Peer review" means that the author's work has been submitted for approval by other experts in their field.

Talk to a healthcare professional you trust before making important decisions about your health or decisions for a person in your care.

2. How can you set up youth for health literacy success?



FC
Family Chat >

How are u?

Im good

making decisions about treatments with the doctor is tough

I'm having them run so many tests!

That's good though, right?

it really is!

I'm glad you encouraged me to speak up and ask questions when we went to the doctor those times

Now it feels less scary

That's so good to hear!

and going over the health insurance stuff with me before I left for school helped alot

Hang in there, you got this! ❤️

Thx! ❤️

Text Message

► **Building health literacy skills from adolescence through early adulthood is critically important**

Health literacy is for everyone. Even young people who are in an advantageous position from an educational, social, and economic perspective can have difficulty working through health issues and making decisions about their care.

Building health literacy skills can start as early as childhood. Get children involved in their own health care, as appropriate. For example:

- Children can be present when scheduling appointments.
- Try to include children in conversations with doctors when possible, rather than allowing them to be passive listeners.
- Encourage them to ask questions when they don't understand.

For older adolescents and young adults who are covered under a parent or guardian's insurance, consider discussing insurance plan information so they are ready to start managing their own health care when the time comes.

3. How can you create inclusive environments?

Good to see you again! Are these still your current pronouns?

MedCheck Database

NAME: Lauren Smith DOB: 10/20/80

PRONOUNS: She/Her GENDER: F

ADDRESS: 100 Main Street

INTAKE FORM

NAME: _____ DOB: _____

What is your current gender identity? Check all that apply:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Transgender Male/Transman/FTM
- ☐ Transgender Female/Transwoman/MTF
- ☐ Gender Queer
- ☐ Decline to answer
- ☐ Additional category (please specify): _____

What sex were you assigned at birth? Check one:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Decline to answer

What are your current pronouns? Check all that apply:

- ☐ She/her/hers
- ☐ He/him/his
- ☐ They/them/theirs
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

Please describe your current relationship status. Check all that apply:

- ☐ Single
- ☐ Married
- ☐ In a civil union
- ☐ In a domestic partnership, living together
- ☐ Partnered, not living together
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ In a committed relationship
- ☐ Decline to answer
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

► **A person may be more open to sharing health information when provided with an inclusive environment and patient intake form.**

It's easy to lose someone's trust when they do not feel respected.

Communications may be designed to support individual health literacy, but if health care providers do not make the effort to present inclusive communications, there will be people who disengage.

This might be due to their own experiences, or in support of others who may be put off by non-inclusive language.

- Inclusivity is about more than just pronouns, but pronouns can be a start.
- Make a habit of learning what is and is not inclusive language and imagery, and use what you learn at every opportunity.

4. How can you use cultural competency?



► **Translations alone are not a perfect solution to supporting health literacy in diverse audiences**

At times, there can be obstacles to making good health decisions even for those patients who are proficient in speaking the primary language of the region, system, or health care providers they are interacting with.



► **Dedicated translators can provide a more unbiased and nuanced health care experience**

While it may be helpful when a staff member is able to speak more than one language, or when a patient's family member or friend might be able to help translate, it is always best to have a dedicated translator on site. A professional translator is less likely to be biased in their interaction with a patient than a family member or friend might be. A translator may also be more well-versed in the idioms and nuances of the patient's primary language than a staff member with a second-language proficiency.



► **Along with language differences, be aware of cultural differences in the meaning assigned to colors and other visual cues**

Graphic design elements, colors, and visual cues that work well for one language and culture may not always be ideal across multiple languages and cultures.

THANK YOU
for your help!

Bold colors, capitalized text, italics, and exclamation marks in an attempt to show gratitude...

THANK YOU!!!
for your help!

...may appear aggressive, confusing, or garish in some cultures.



Learn how to engage with people's cultural logic, language, and experiences by putting the principles of cultural awareness, humility, and competence into practice.

Ideally, an objective third party should perform translation services for interactions between patients and staff.

HEALTH LITERACY MONTH

FOSTERING PATIENT EMPOWERMENT



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CISCRP is a non-profit organization dedicated to sharing unbiased information about clinical research.