



Health Literacy: Understand the Complex Language of Healthcare

Healthcare is complicated. Knowing how to find health information when you need it, understanding what health information means, and making informed healthcare decisions is known as “**health literacy**.”

Tips to Boost your Health Literacy:

- **Gather basic information** from your provider about your conditions and the potential treatment options. The more you know, the better.
- **Seek clarification right away** on anything you do not understand. If the provider says something you are unclear about, ask that it be repeated in an easier-to-understand way.
- **Make sure you understand any new information** you're given. If you receive new instructions, repeat them back to the provider to confirm your understanding. With new equipment, ask the provider to show you how to use it and then demonstrate what you learned. Take time to make sure you are doing everything correctly.
- **Don't hesitate to follow up** with your provider's office if you have questions after your visit.
- **Take notes** during medical appointments. With your provider's permission, record the conversation with a smartphone so you can share your diagnosis or treatment plan with others or refer back later.
- **Ask family and friends to assist you** in following the medical orders your provider has recommended.
- **Talk with your provider about potential barriers** that prevent you from following orders, and create a plan to overcome those obstacles.
- **Tailor your medical routine to your daily routine and lifestyle.** Create reminders for yourself to take medication, exercise or check your insulin levels.
- **Ask your provider and pharmacist to send reminders** for appointments and prescription refills via email, text or telephone.

Patients with low health literacy might not follow proper care instructions.

Understanding what to do, and why it is important, can improve your health and reduce unnecessary treatments and costs.

With strong health literacy, you can take a proactive role in your health!

Sources:

• Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Engaging Patients and Families in Their Health Care
<https://www.hhs.gov/patient-safety/patients-families/index.html#hospital-patients>
• National Institutes of Health, Talking to Your Doctor or Healthcare Provider
<https://www.nih.gov/institutes-nih/nih-office-director/office-communications-public-liaison/clear-communication/talking-your-doctor>