



## Key Takeaways Health Literacy

### What is health literacy?

- Personal health literacy is the degree to which individuals can find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.
- Organizational health literacy is the degree to which organizations equitably enable individuals to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.<sup>1</sup>

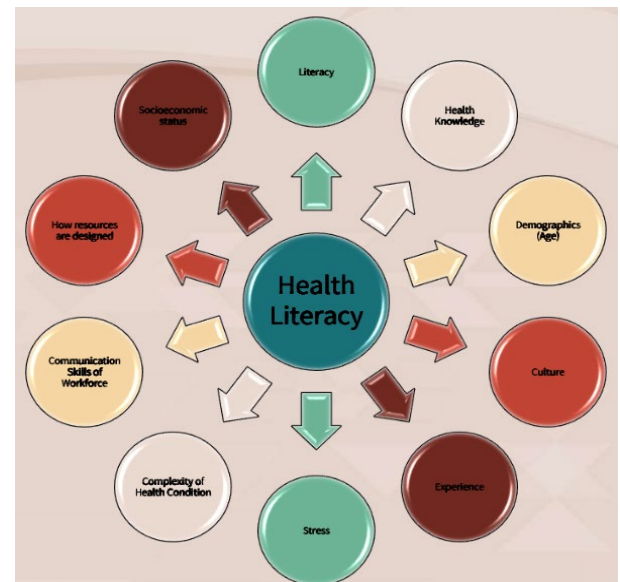
### What does having low health literacy look like?

- Missed appointments
- Lack of follow through with additional testing, referrals, or follow-ups
- Incorrectly filling out medical forms or not at all
- Failure to pick up medication or medication taken incorrectly
- Not asking questions
- A patient who is not able to list the medications or describe their own treatments<sup>2</sup>

### Strategies for Improving Organizational Health Literacy

- Assess health literacy within your organization
- Make health literacy part of your organization's mission, structure, policies, operational structure, and strategy
- Train and support workforce to learn more about health literacy and incorporate cultural competency into care
  - Know your audience
  - Incorporate audience needs into the development and testing of oral or written educational materials
  - Be conscious of personal bias
  - Be prepared to meet patient and their family where they are at

### What influences health literacy?





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Communication Strategies for Improving Health Literacy<sup>3</sup>

Verbal	Non-Verbal	Cultural Relevant
Keep it Simple	Smile. Build Rapport.	Use preferred terminology
Incorporate Patient's Words	Make sure the room is private and comfortable	Understand belief systems about health, disease, wellness
Give most important information first	Use easy to understand visuals	Understand and respect cultural differences
Avoid information overload	Look for active listening	Incorporate traditional healing
Speak Slowly	Sit down (instead of standing)	Speak in native language or use a translator
Use Teach Back	Demonstrate	Stay connected

### Resources UIOs can use to Improve Health Literacy

- [IHS Introduction to Health Literacy](#)
- [National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy](#)
- [The Plain Writing Act of 2010](#)
- [CDC Health Literacy Training & Resources](#)
- [The CDC Clear Communication Index](#)
- [Additional Health Literacy Trainings](#)

### Citations

1. CDC. (2022, February 2). In What Is Health Literacy?. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/learn/index.html>
2. Graham, S., & Brookey, J. (2008). Do patients understand? The Permanente journal, 12(3), 67–69. <https://doi.org/10.7812/TPP/07-144> Indian Health Service Health Literacy Workgroup. Indian Health Service: White Paper on Health Literacy, August 2009
3. CDC. (2021, August 16). In Patient Engagement. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/researchevaluate/patient-engage.html>

