

# Health Literacy

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## Disclosures

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No financial disclosures

## Learning Objectives

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Understand the concept of health literacy

Identify barriers to health literacy

Strategies to increase health literacy in practice

## CONCEPTS

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## What is Health Literacy?

- Personal health literacy is the degree to which individuals have the ability to 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.

## Personal Definition

A patient centered approach in which an individual is able to acquire, communicate, understand, and apply health-related information in daily activities that align with preferences, values, needs, and ability to make informed decisions.



## Poll Question

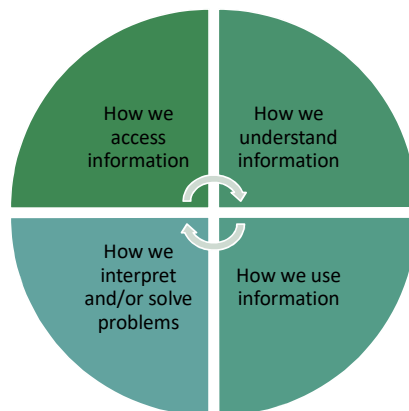
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Is health literacy assessed at your clinic/unit?

- Yes
- No
- Only under certain circumstances

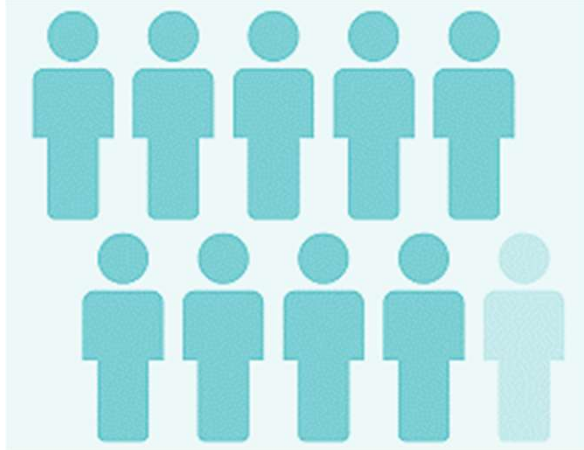
## Key Aspects in Health-Related Decision Making

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## Health Literacy in US

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9 out of 10 adults  
have trouble with  
health literacy.

## The Frog Industry?

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[https://www.tiktok.com/@medschoolboiz/video/7088135461394189611?is\\_from\\_webapp=v1&item\\_id=7088135461394189611&lang=en](https://www.tiktok.com/@medschoolboiz/video/7088135461394189611?is_from_webapp=v1&item_id=7088135461394189611&lang=en)

# National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL)

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has conducted assessments of U.S. adult literacy since 1985.

The 2003 NAAL was the first assessment of the nation's progress in adult literacy since 1992.

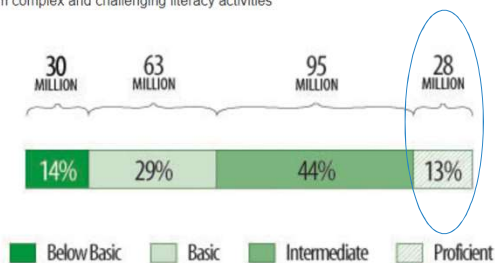
- 10 categories of questions
  - General and language background (19)
  - Education background and experiences (19)
  - Political and social participation (12)
  - Labor force participation (15)
  - Literacy practices (7)
  - Job training and skills (10)
  - Demographic information (9)
  - Family literacy (5)
  - Household income and welfare participation (12)
  - **Health (10)**

## NAAL Results

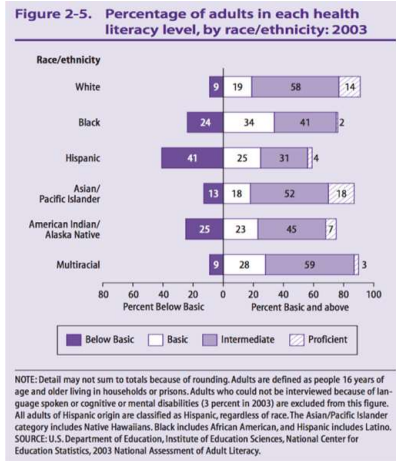
Number of Adults in Each Prose Literacy Level

### Prose Literacy

- Below Basic:
  - no more than the most *simple* and *concrete* literacy skills
- Basic:
  - can perform simple and everyday literacy activities
- Intermediate:
  - can perform moderately challenging literacy activities
- Proficient:
  - can perform complex and challenging literacy activities



# Overall Healthy Literacy Scores



[HTTPS://WWW.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV/PMC/ARTICLES/PMC7710382/](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7710382/)

## Additional Standardized Assessments

- Rapid estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine (REALM), Short Form (SF)
- BRIEF 16 Health Literacy Questions
- Short Assessment of Health Literacy (50)
- Test of Functional Health Literacy in Adults TOFHLA Numeracy

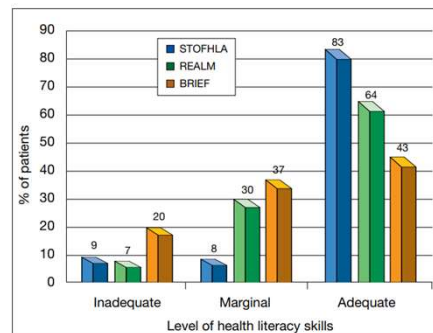


Figure. Study participants' levels of health literacy as indicated by the Short Test of Functional Health Literacy in Adults (STOFHLA), the Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy (REALM), and the BRIEF.

JOLIE HAUN, PHD, VIRGINIA NOLAND-DODD, PHD, MPH, JILL VARNES, EDD, JOHN GRAHAM-POLE, MD, BARBARA RINZIO, PHD, AND PATRICIA DONALDSON, RN

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (2010). National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy. Washington, DC: Author.

# Barriers to Proficiency

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## Poll Question

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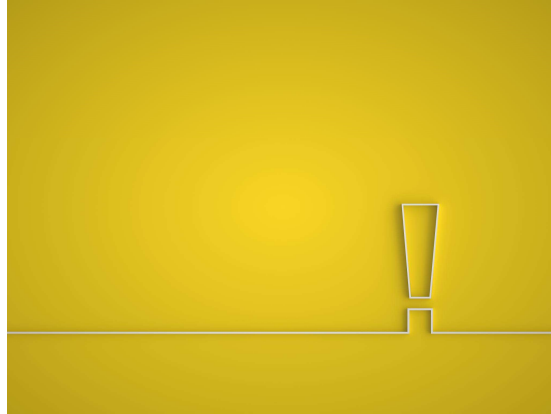
Have you ever been confused by what a medical professional has told you?

- Yes
- No



## The Patient is Not the Problem

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## Barriers to Proficiency

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Emotional Capacity

Insurance

Miscommunication

Systemic Structures

Cultural Competence

Embarrassment /Uncomfortability

Age

Knowledge of Medical Terms

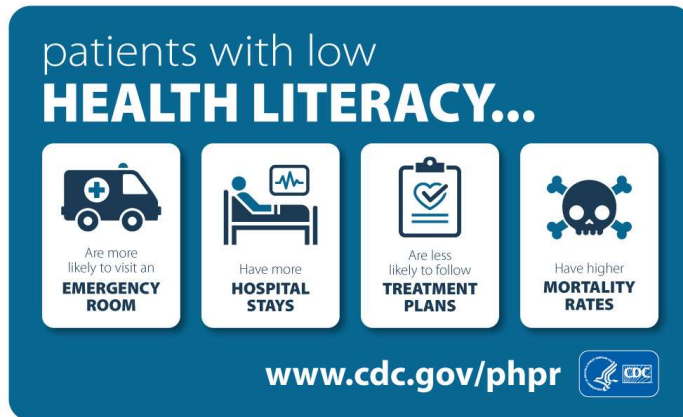
Mental limitations

Reading, Writing, and Mathematical Skills

Access to Health Information

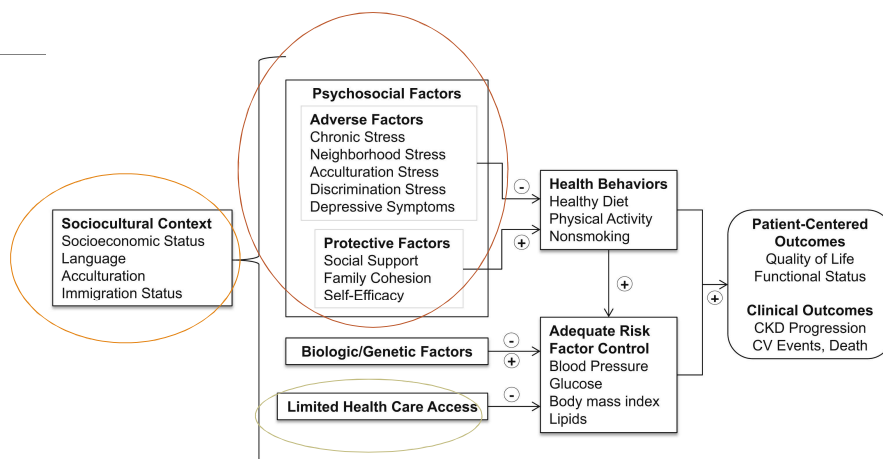
Auditory Issues

# How Health Literacy Affects Care

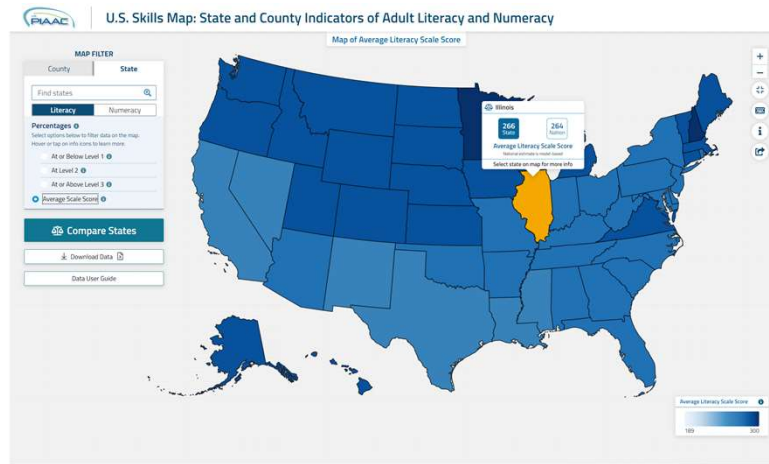


INFOGRAPHIC: HEALTH LITERACY | CDC

# Social Determinants of Health



## Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)



[HTTPS://NCES.ED.GOV/SURVEYS/PIAAC/SKILLSMAP/?VIEW=COMPARISON&GEOLEVEL=COUNTY&FI  
RST=17031](https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/skillsmap/?view=comparison&geolevel=county&filter=17031)

## Most Common Medical Terms Patients Don't Understand

- Screening
- Dermatologist
- Immunization
- Contraception
- Hypertension
- Oral
- Diabetes
- Diet
- Hygiene
- Prevention
- Mental Health
- Annually
- Depression
- Respiratory problems
- Community Resources
- Monitor
- Cardiovascular
- Referral
- Eligible
- Arthritis

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (2010). National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy. Washington, DC: Author.



## How Does Low Literacy Present?

- Patients often make excuses when asked to read or fill out forms. Examples include: "I don't have my glasses," "I'm too tired to read," and "I'll read this when I get home."
- Poor readers often lift text closer to their eyes, or point to the text with a finger while reading. Many times their eyes wander over the page without finding a central focus.
- Patients may provide an incomplete medical history or check items as "no" to avoid follow-up questions.
- Poor readers often miss appointments and/or make errors regarding their medication.
- Identify their medications they look at the pills for color, size, and shape, since they can't read the labels.
- Patients often show signs of nervousness, confusion, frustration, and even indifference. They may withdraw or avoid situations where complex learning is required.
- Patients often give incorrect answers when questioned about what they have read.

[HTTPS://OJIN.NURSINGWORLD.ORG/MAINMENCATEGORIES/ANAMARKETPLACE/ANAPERIODICALS/OJIN/TABLEOFCONTENTS/VOL142009/NO3SEPT09/ASSESSING-HEALTH-LITERACY-.HTML](https://ojin.nursingworld.org/mainmenucategories/anamarketplace/anaperiodicals/ojin/tableofcontents/vol142009/no3sept09/assessing-health-literacy.html)

## Video- Dr. Lisa: On the Street



# STRATEGIES

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## Strategies: Patient Centered Approach

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## Strategies: Strengthen the Team



[https://www.tiktok.com/@gameova83/video/7113588823216655662?is\\_copy\\_url=1&is\\_from\\_webapp=v1&lang=en](https://www.tiktok.com/@gameova83/video/7113588823216655662?is_copy_url=1&is_from_webapp=v1&lang=en)

## Interventions

Murray MD, Young J,  
Hoke S, et al. <sup>47</sup>

A pharmacist-led intervention for outpatients with heart failure featuring patient-centered verbal instructions and clear written instructions that made use of icons and an easy-to-follow timeline. The pharmacist worked with a multi-disciplinary team

Compared with controls, patients in the intervention group had fewer emergency department visits and hospitalizations, as well as lower annual direct health care costs. Medication adherence was higher in the intervention group, but this difference dissipated somewhat during follow-up, suggesting a need for continued intervention

RIDPATH JR, LARSON EB, GREENE SM. CAN INTEGRATING HEALTH LITERACY INTO THE PATIENT-CENTERED MEDICAL HOME HELP US WEATHER THE PERFECT STORM?. *J GEN INTERN MED.* 2012;27(5):588-594. DOI:10.1007/S11606-011-1964-6

# Interventions






Table 1

Effective Health Literacy Interventions Well-suited for Implementation in a PCMH

Authors	Intervention description	Key findings and insights
Rothman RL, DeWalt DA, Malone RM, et al. <sup>45</sup>	Primary-care based diabetes disease management program featuring individualized communication delivered to improve understanding among low-literacy patients	Among low-literacy patients, those in the intervention were more likely than controls to achieve target blood sugar levels. This suggests that programs addressing literacy can help improve outcomes for low-literacy patients and that increasing access to such programs could help reduce health disparities

RIDPATH JR, LARSON EB, GREENE SM. CAN INTEGRATING HEALTH LITERACY INTO THE PATIENT-CENTERED MEDICAL HOME HELP US WEATHER THE PERFECT STORM?. *J GEN INTERN MED.* 2012;27(5):588-594. DOI:10.1007/s11606-011-1964-6

## Strategies: Individualize Learning Tools

-  Speak in clear, concise formats
-  Use Video and Photos
-  Demonstration and Interactive Models
-  Communicate in the patient's preferred language
-  Use checklists



## Be “DIRECT”

### Address literacy and math skills.

- Ask patients directly about their literacy skills. Using the DIRECT tool,<sup>3</sup> developed by the American Medical Association, can make discussing reading difficulties with patients feel less awkward.

#### DIRECT— Asking Patients About Literacy Skills

D – Ask about **difficulty reading**: “Have you ever had a problem with reading?”

I – Ask if the patient has an **interest in improving**: “Would you be interested in a program to help you improve your reading?”

R – Have **referral information** for adults and family literacy programs ready to give to those identified with reading difficulty.

E – Ask **everyone** about their literacy skills. Let patients know it is your policy to ask everyone.

C – Emphasize that low literacy is a **common problem** and they are not alone: “Half of Americans have some difficulty reading.”

T – **Take down barriers** to joining literacy classes (e.g., help with the initial phone call, have informational sessions at the clinic, make followup contact with patients to see if they were able to find the right class)

## Strategies: Effective Communication

### Verbal vs. Non-Verbal

- Emotional capacity
- Body language
- Environment
- Use preferred language

### Ask- Tell- Ask

### 7 C’s of Communication

- Clear
- Concise
- Concrete
- Correct
- Coherent
- Complete
- Courteous

Emphasize Key Points

Teach Back Method



## Strategies: Measuring Success

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### Observation:

Fluid Management

Change in labs

Consistency with treatment

### Conversation:

Patient Mentor

Teach back method

Continuous education

## Current Initiatives

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## National Health Literacy Plan

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- Develop and Share Health and Safety Information That Is Accurate, Accessible, and Actionable
- Integrate Clear Communication and Health Literacy into Public Health Planning, Funding, Policy Development, Research, and Evaluation
- Incorporate Accurate, Standards-Based, and Developmentally Appropriate Health and Science Information and Curricula in Educational Settings from Preschool through University Levels

CDC

## Strategies: The Three A's

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The CDC Health Literacy plan suggested all health information should be:

- Accurate
- Accessible
- Actionable

## Accurate

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## Accessible

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Who can see it?

How is information seen?

Are you able to glance and still retain information?

Intentional and unintentional exposure methods?

Is the message/main statement helpful?

## Actionable

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Be concrete and specific

Limit information and tasks to 2-4 key points per appointment

Goals should be realistic and attainable

Engage in speaker/listener exercises to confirm understanding



## Current/Future Research

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### Healthy People 2030

- Most objectives are in infancy stage (developmental and research)
- We have baseline knowledge of healthy literacy, poor communication with provider, desired outcomes, health IT
- Data will allow us to improve strategies and health outcomes

# Overview

[HTTPS://PLAY.KAHOOT.IT/V2/?QUIZID=7B861BB0-CD1B-4BDF-B984-67215A08432C](https://PLAY.KAHOOT.IT/V2/?QUIZID=7B861BB0-CD1B-4BDF-B984-67215A08432C)

# Resources

## Literacy and Health in America

- [https://cdn1.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/135/2012/09/health\\_activities\\_materials\\_tasks\\_chart.pdf](https://cdn1.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/135/2012/09/health_activities_materials_tasks_chart.pdf)

## Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

- <https://health.gov/healthliteracyonline/>
- <https://www.healthliteracytx.org/innovatetocommunicate.html>

## Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's (AHRQ) Toolkit

- [AHRQ Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit | Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#)

## CDC Planning Templates for Health Literacy

- [https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/pdf/planning\\_template.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/pdf/planning_template.pdf)

## Health Literacy Modules

- <https://nnlm.gov/guides/clinical-conversations-training-program>

Questions?

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THANK YOU

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