

Health literacy

What is health literacy?

Health literacy is the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.

Why is health literacy important?

Nearly 9 out of 10 adults have difficulty using the everyday health information that is routinely available in health care facilities, retail outlets, media, and communities. Limited health literacy is associated with poorer health outcomes and higher health care costs.

Limited health literacy affects people's ability to:

- Search for and use health information
- Adopt healthy behaviors
- Act on important public health alerts.

There are a number of Federal resources to help health and communication professionals improve health literacy, including the National Action Plan to Improve Health Literacy, Health Literacy Online: A Guide to Writing and Designing Easy-to-Use Health Web Sites and the Quick Guide to Health Literacy. These resources and many others are included in the tools, reports and research, and related resources sections.

Source: Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

For more information, visit:

<http://www.health.gov/communication/literacy/>

