

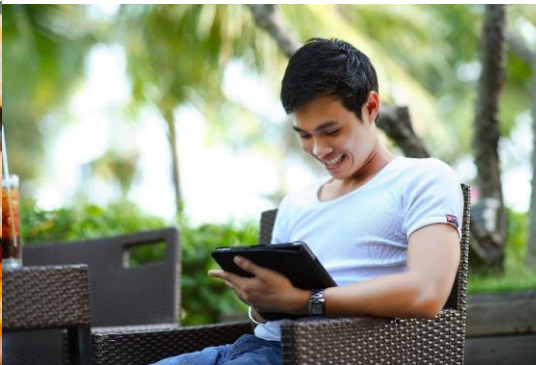
Effective Health Communication and Health Literacy: Understanding the Connection

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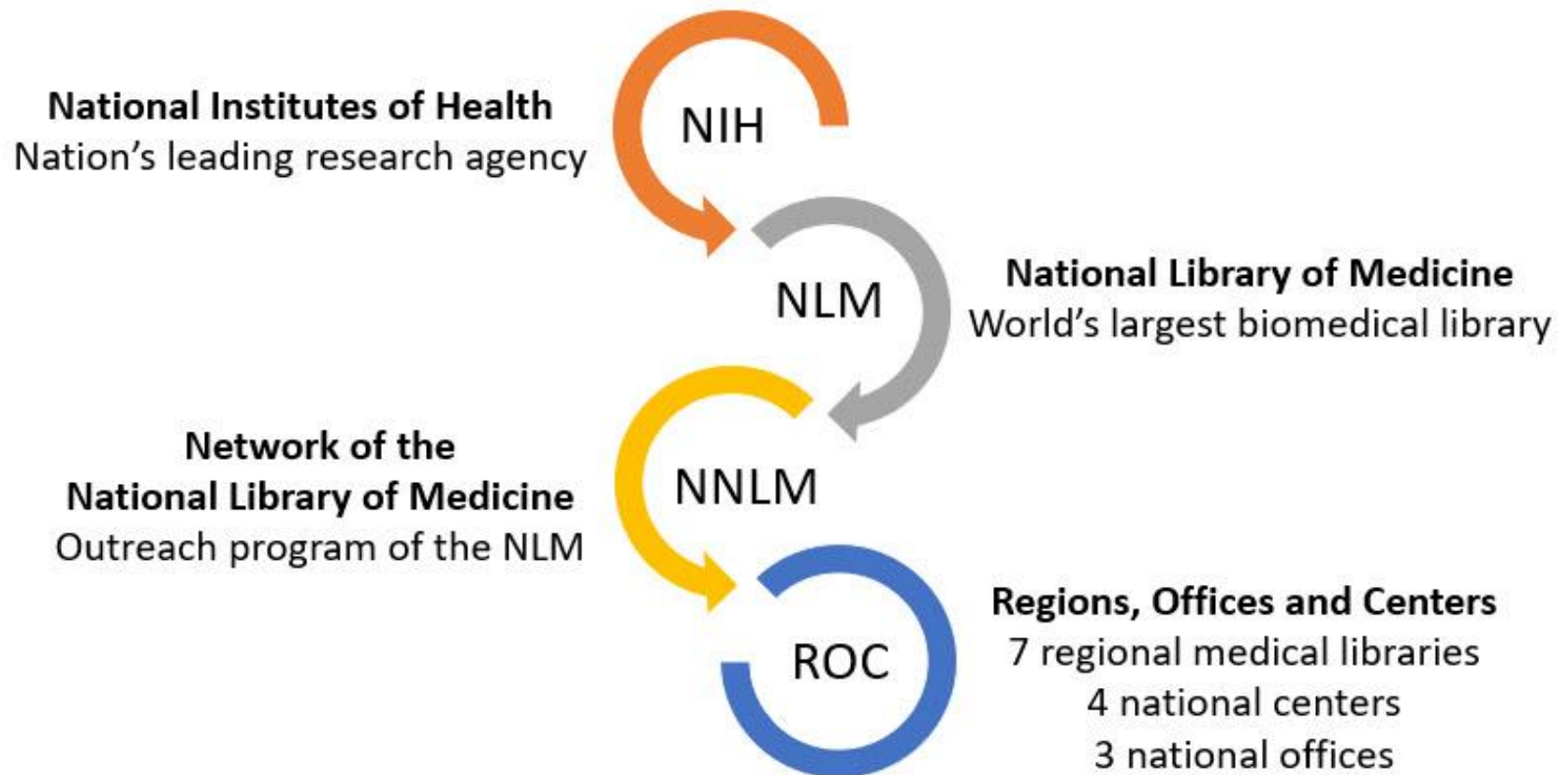
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NNLM Network of the National Library of Medicine

The logo features a stylized map of the United States composed of a network of grey lines connecting various points across the country. The acronym "NNLM" is written in large, bold, blue letters across the center of the map. To the right of the map, the text "Network of the National Library of Medicine" is written in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font.

Organizational Structure



Objectives

- Define health literacy
- Describe universal precautions for health literacy
- Name 3 components of clear health communication
- Identify 3 online resources you can use as tools to promote health literacy

Agenda

- Introduction to Health Literacy
- Communication
 - Print communication
 - Verbal communication
- MedlinePlus to promote health literacy
- EthnoMed

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.

Shared responsibility

***Health literacy is a shared responsibility
between patients and providers***

Helen Osborne

Why is it important to address health literacy?

patients with low
HEALTH LITERACY...



Are more likely to visit an
EMERGENCY ROOM



Have more
HOSPITAL STAYS



Are less likely to follow
TREATMENT PLANS



Have higher
MORTALITY RATES

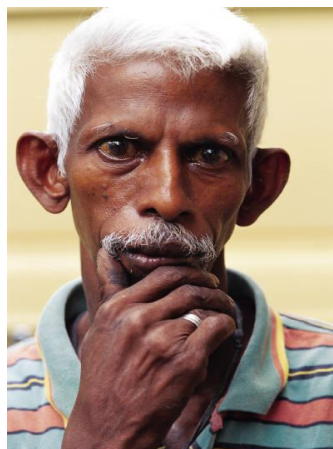
www.cdc.gov/phpr



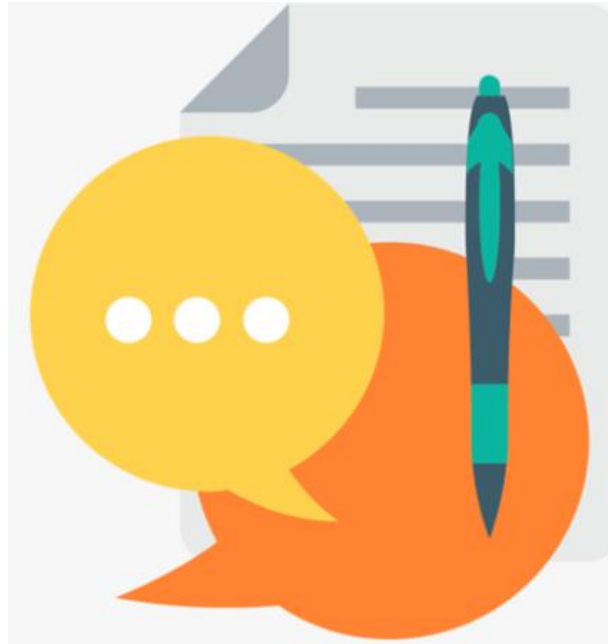
Risk factors for low health literacy

People with low health literacy are more likely to:

- Have a low-income level
- Have a chronic illness
- Have a disability
- Be older adults
- Identify as a racial or ethnic minority
- Speak English as a second language
- Not have a high school degree or GED



Communication



Health Literacy Universal Precautions



You can't tell by looking

Assume that all patients and caregivers may have difficulty comprehending health information

Communicate in ways that anyone can understand

AHRQ Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit



Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
Advancing Excellence in Health Care • www.ahrq.gov

Second
Edition

Clear health communication

Clear communication	Less clear communication
Plain language	Medical jargon
Simple messages	Complex messages
Need-to-know information (3 to 5 items)	Nice-to-know information
Anticipating misunderstanding	Assumes understanding
Confirming understanding	Infers understanding
Clarifying	Repeats the same thing (louder)
Objective, judgement free	Inadvertently shaming

Can you substitute another word(s) for easier understanding?

- Cardiologist
- Pulmonologist
- Anti-inflammatory
- PRN
- Benign



Plain language sentences: examples

- **“You don't have COVID-19”**

instead of “Your COVID-19 test results were negative”

- **"Eat less salt"**

instead of "reduce sodium intake"

- **"Do not eat or drink before taking this medication"**

instead of "take this medication on an empty stomach"

Plain language principles

- Use familiar terms, not jargon, acronyms, or medical terminology
- Chunk information
 - use ample headings and subheadings with less under each one
 - use bullet points
- Organize logically: most important information first
- Write in a conversational voice vs. academic or research voice
 - use the active voice

<https://plainlanguage.gov/guidelines/>

Print Communication: Readability vs. Plain Language

Readability: how easy (or not) something is to read.

Plain language: writing that people can understand. It ensures that readers can grasp the message the first time they read it.

READABILITY

NOW THIS LOOKS LIKE
SOMETHIN' I'D READ!



PLAIN LANGUAGE

I'M UNDERSTANDIN' ALL
THIS INFO UP IN HERE!



HEALTH LITERACY

I'M GONNA GO MAKE
SOME INFORMED DECISIONS!



SAM: subheadings and chunking

Subheadings and “chunking”: Few people can remember more than 7 independent items. For those with low literacy skills the limit may be 3 or 5 items. Longer lists need to be partitioned into smaller chunks.

Check One: Superior:

1) Lists are grouped under descriptive subheadings.

2) No more than 5 items are presented without a subheading.

Adequate

No more than 7 items are presented without a subheading.

Not Suitable

More than 7 items are presented without a subheading.

Applying SAM



Pertussis: What Parents Need to Know

What is pertussis?

Pertussis, or whooping cough, is a persistent cough illness. Anyone of any age can get pertussis.

What are the symptoms of pertussis?

The first symptoms of pertussis are similar to a cold. After a week or two, the cough worsens and may occur in sudden, uncontrollable bursts. Sometimes coughing will lead to vomiting or a high-pitched whoop sound when breathing in. Persons with pertussis may seem well between coughing spells. These spells become less frequent over time, but may continue for several weeks or months until the lungs heal.

How is pertussis spread?

Pertussis bacteria are spread through droplets produced during coughing or sneezing. These droplets don't travel very far through the air and usually only infect persons nearby.

When and for how long can a person spread pertussis?

Persons with pertussis can spread it to others for the first 3 weeks of coughing or until they complete 5 days of antibiotic treatment, whichever occurs first.

How can pertussis be prevented?

Vaccination is the best way to prevent pertussis. Vaccination against pertussis is part of the regularly recommended childhood vaccines. A pertussis vaccine booster is also recommended for adolescents and adults. Ask your health care provider for more information.

Persons who have been vaccinated for pertussis may still get pertussis disease, but will generally have a milder illness.

Antibiotics are sometimes recommended to prevent pertussis in close contacts of someone with pertussis, such as household members.

Is there a lab test for pertussis?

Yes, but only if someone has symptoms. Most commonly, the nasal passage is swabbed and the swab is examined for the presence of pertussis bacteria. Sometimes a test using blood will be done to look for an immune response.

How long should someone with pertussis stay home from child care, school, work, etc.?

Persons with pertussis should stay home from child care, school, work, and other activities until they have finished 5 days of antibiotics, unless they have already been coughing for 3 or more weeks.

More tips

- Wash your hands often.
- Stay at home if you are ill.
- When coughing, cover your mouth with a tissue or cough into your sleeve.

Vaccine-Preventable Disease Section
PO Box 64975
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975
651-201-5414
www.health.state.mn.us/pertussis

6/25/2019

To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5414.

Descriptive subheadings



3 items under subheading

Applying SAM (cont'd)

September 14, 2017

**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN BROWARD COUNTY ISSUES
PRECAUTIONS FOR FOOD SAFETY**



****HURRICANE IRMA ****
Public Health Advisory #7

Contact:

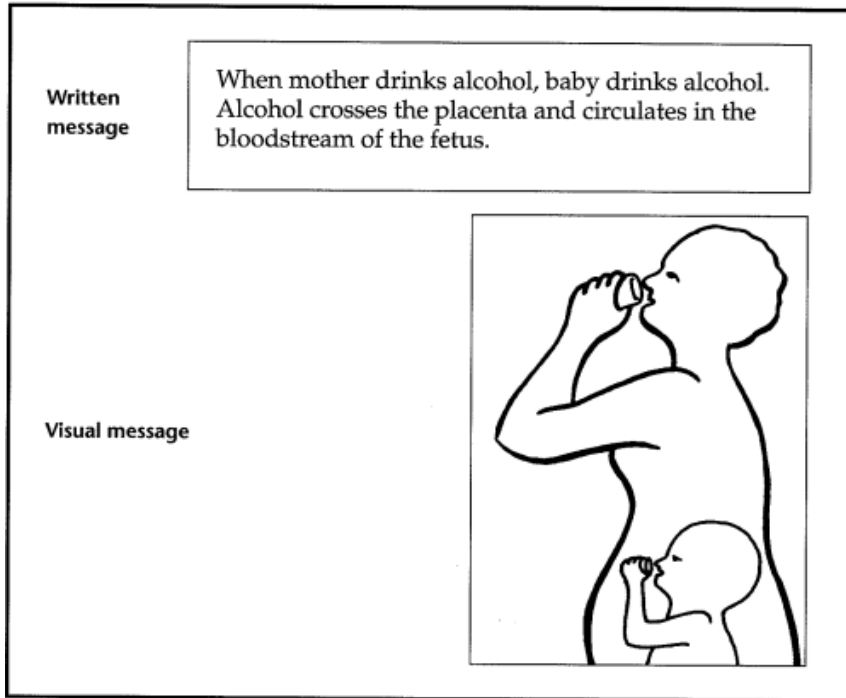
(Fort Lauderdale) – Due to the number of households still without electrical power, the Florida Department of Health in Broward County (DOH-Broward) would like to remind everyone that it is important to take careful precautions to ensure food safety. The risk of food poisoning is heightened when refrigerators and ovens are inoperable; discard any food that has been at room temperature for two hours or more, and any food that has an unusual odor, color or texture. Just remember – ***When in doubt, throw it out!***

People can practice safe food handling and prevent food-borne illness by following these simple steps:

- Always keep a thermometer in your refrigerator. The temperature should read 41 degrees Fahrenheit (F) or below.
- A full cooler will maintain its cold temperatures longer than one that is partially filled, so it is important to pack plenty of extra ice or freezer packs to insure a constant cold temperature. If available, 25 pounds of dry ice will keep a ten-cubic-foot freezer below freezing for 3-4 days. Use care when handling dry ice and wear dry, heavy gloves to avoid injury.
- Thawed food can usually be eaten if it is still "refrigerator cold."
- Eggs and other foods need to be stored in 41F or slightly below. Do not eat foods that may have spoiled.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water that has been boiled or disinfected and cooled. Hands should be washed before preparing or eating food, after using the bathroom or changing a diaper, after handling uncooked food, after playing with a pet, after handling garbage, after tending to someone who is sick or injured, after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing, after participating in flood cleanup activities, and after handling articles contaminated with flood water or sewage.
- Fight "cross-contamination," which is the transfer of harmful bacteria to food from other foods. Never place any type of food on a plate, cutting board or utensil that previously held raw meat, poultry or seafood.
- When grilling foods, preheat the coals on your grill for 20-30 minutes or until the coals are lightly coated with ash. **GRILLS SHOULD NEVER BE PLACED INDOORS.**
- Use a meat thermometer to ensure that food reaches a safe internal temperature.
 - Hamburgers and ground poultry should be cooked to 160 F.
 - Poultry parts: 170 F.
 - Roasts, steaks and other large cuts of beef: 145 F. (rare) and 160 F (medium).
- Fish should be cooked until the meat is opaque and flakes easily.
- Use sanitized food and water bowls for your pets and be sure that they do not drink from flood-contaminated surfaces.
- Never taste food to determine its safety!



Use visuals to aid communication



- Concentrate on the main message
- Use clear headings, labels, and captions
- Use simple, realistic pictures
- Use colors to aid comprehension
- Beware of variations in interpretations of standard images

Verbal communication

- Listen carefully
- Use the receiver's words
- Use plain language and avoid jargon
- Slow down
- Limit and repeat content
- Demonstrate how it's done
- Use graphics



Invite questions

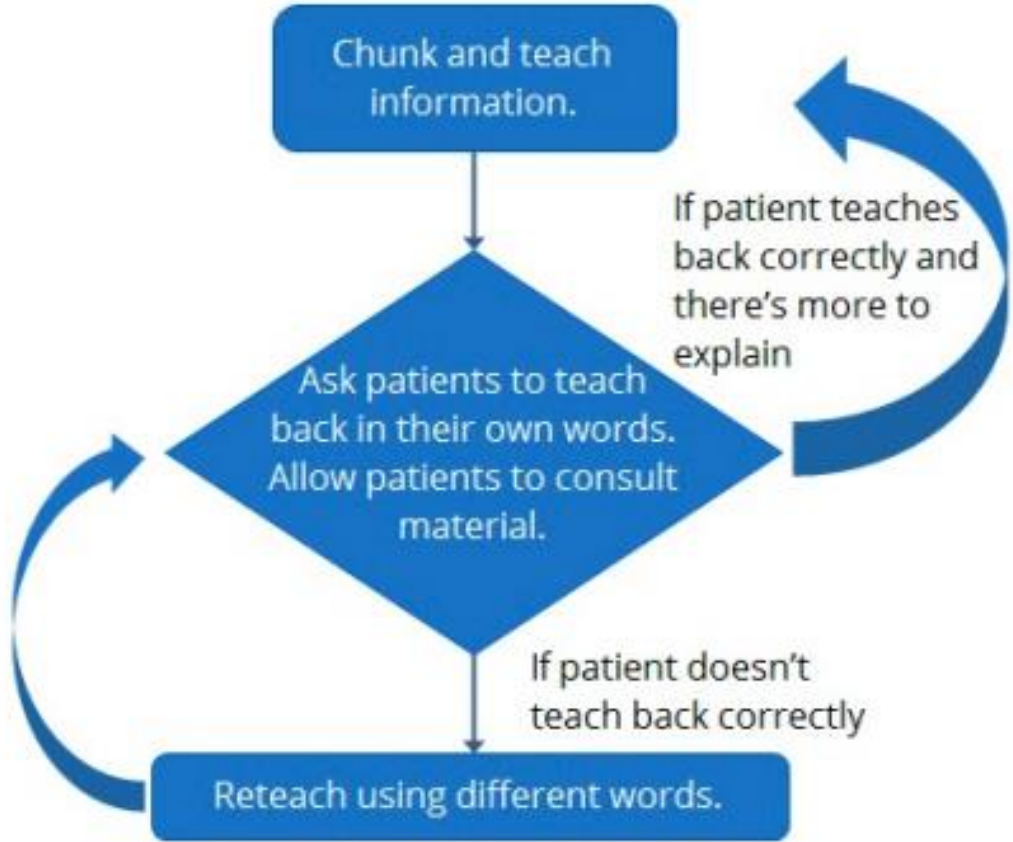
- Instead of: Do you have any questions? (too easy to answer "no")
- Better to say: What questions do you have?



Confirm understanding

- Instead of: Do you understand? (too easy to answer "yes")
- Better to use the teach-back method

The Teach-Back Method



MedlinePlus tools to promote health literacy

Welcome to MedlinePlus

MedlinePlus is an online health information resource for patients and their families and friends. It is a service of the National Library of Medicine (NLM), the world's largest medical library, which is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). [Learn more about MedlinePlus](#)



FEATURED TOPIC

Cervical Cancer Screening

Cervical cancer screening is usually part of a woman's health checkup. [Learn how the Pap smear and HPV test can help prevent cervical cancer or find it early.](#)

[Learn more](#)

 Health Topics Find information on health, wellness, disorders and conditions	 Medical Encyclopedia Articles and images for diseases, symptoms, tests, treatments	 Genetics Explore genetic conditions, genes, and how genetic variations affect health
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 **Easy-to-Read Health Information**

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Culturally aware communication

- Tailor messages to specific groups
- Be aware of cultural norms and customs that influence communication, decision making, health beliefs, and health behaviors
- Avoid idioms and jargon
- Use high quality translators and interpreters
- Avoid stereotypes

PLEASE PROTECT ONE ANOTHER FROM COVID-19



**Wear a face covering and keep 6 feet
apart from others in public spaces.**

Wash hands before and after wearing a mask



Fit coverings snugly but
comfortably against the
side of the face



Use the ties or loops to put
your mask on and off



Face coverings should
have multiple layers



Avoid touching the front of
the face covering, especially
when you take it off



Wash and dry your
cloth mask daily



Children 5 and over must
wear a face covering

KCFE DCE file: 2004_1081BT_covid19-MASK_Evillaz.ai

For more information:
kingcounty.gov/masks

Public Health
Seattle & King County 

Use visuals
and examples
that reflect
the audience

EthnoMed

*Ethno*MED

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INTEGRATING CULTURAL
INFORMATION INTO CLINICAL
PRACTICE



The Indian Health Service is working closely with our tribal partners to coordinate a comprehensive public health response to both [COVID-19](#) and [mpox](#).

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for Providers

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Patient Education

Materials

Educational resources, locally developed and culturally relevant patient education handouts on a wide variety of diseases and topics are available.

- [Patient Education Materials](#)
- [Health Literacy](#)
- [HIV/AIDS Training](#)
- [Influenza](#)

Protocols and Codes

The use of the Patient Education Protocols and Codes (PEPCs) standardizes the documentation of patient/health education encounters from one health professional to another.

Learn more about [Patient Education Protocols and Codes \(PEPC\) Website](#).



Summary

- **Health Literacy** is a shared responsibility
- **Universal precautions for health literacy** ensure that we communicate in ways that everyone can understand
- **Clear health communication** best practices include using plain language, limiting to "need to know" information, confirming understanding, and being aware of cultural differences
- Free **online resources** you can use to promote health literacy include SAM, MedlinePlus, EthnoMed, IHS, and the AHRQ Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit

Questions?



Contact Information

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