



# In the Know:

## Health literacy news and best practices

October 2022

### It's Health Literacy Month!

October is national **Health Literacy Month**. While improving health literacy is important year-round, this month is a reminder for organizations and individuals to promote the importance of understandable health information.

This year, the theme of our Health Literacy Month campaign is "**Back to Basics**". We chose this theme because it allows us to reflect on key health literacy concepts from previous years and explore how these concepts have changed over time.

Our "**Back to Basics**" campaign covers four main topics:

- Health Literacy, Past and Present;
- The Teach-Back Method;
- Plain Language; and
- Health Equity.

### Health Literacy, Past and Present

The term "health literacy" dates back to 1974, when it first appeared in an academic research paper titled "Health Education as Social Policy".

Today, the **Healthy People 2030** initiative breaks down health literacy into two categories: **personal health literacy** and **organizational health literacy**. Personal health literacy is defined as "The degree to which individuals can find, understand, and use health information and services to make health-related decisions." Organizational health literacy is defined as "The degree to which organizations equitably enable individuals to find, understand, and use health information and services to make health-related decisions."



# BACK TO BASICS

### Did you know?

Literacy skills are the largest predictor of someone's health status - more so than age, income, ethnicity or education level.\*

Studies show that using health-literate practices during medication reviews with patients helps reduce medication errors and increase adherence.\*\*

Compared to only 9% of Whites who had below basic health literacy:

- 24% of Blacks had below basic health literacy
- 25% of American Indians and Alaska Natives had below basic health literacy
- 41% of Hispanics had below basic health literacy\*\*\*

\*Partnership for Clear Health Communication, 2003.

\*\*Building Health-Literate Organizations, 2014.

\*\*\*The Health Literacy of America's Adults: Results from the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 2003.

### REGISTER TODAY



*Empowering Leadership,  
Policy, and Action*

A virtual event on October 26, 2022 from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Click here to register for this free event.

## The Teach-Back Method

A key technique to check patient understanding of health information is known as The Teach-Back Method.

What is teach-back?

- Asking patients to explain in their own words what they need to know or do.
- A chance to check understanding and re-teach information if needed.
- It is not a test of the patient, but of how well the clinician explained a concept.

## Plain Language

Complex medical terminology and confusing health insurance jargon affects people's ability to obtain, process and understand basic health information and services.

Health care professionals have a duty to provide information in simple, clear and plain language, and to check that patients have understood the information before ending the conversation.

What is plain language?

- Communication your audience can understand the first time they hear or read it.
- Language that allows people to find what they need, understand what they find, and act appropriately on that understanding.

## Health Equity and Health Literacy

Health literacy and health equity are closely linked. At the Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership, we consider health literacy as a foundation to achieving health equity goals.

Most people are impacted by limited health literacy. But populations most likely to experience low health literacy are also most likely to experience health disparities. Seniors, minority groups, and people with disabilities, low incomes, limited reading skills, or limited English proficiency are more likely to experience communication barriers and misunderstandings.

## Upcoming events

### Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership meetings

Virtual Meetings  
10:30 a.m.-noon, first Wednesday of the month

- October 5
- November 2
- December - *no meeting*

### Virtual Health Literacy in Action Conference (HLiA)

- October 13-14 (virtual event)

### Health Literacy Annual Research Conference (HARC)

- October 24-25 (virtual event)

### 2022 MN Health Literacy Conference

- October 26 (virtual event)

## Follow us on social media

Stay up-to-date on our Health Literacy Month campaign as well as health literacy best practices, tips and events by following us on social media.



@MNHealthLit



@MNHealthLit



@Minnesota Health Literacy Partnership



### Check out our crossword puzzle!

Looking for a fun way to test your health literacy knowledge? Maybe do it together with your team to start a conversation about health literacy this month.

### Watch our Back to Basics webinar series!

Click on the links below to view a webinar on each of the four main topics.

- Webinar 1: Back to Basics: Health Literacy, Past & Present
- Webinar 2: Back to Basics: The teach-Back Method
- Webinar 3: Back to Basics: Plain Language
- Webinar 4: Back to Basics: Health Equity

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[healthliteracymn.org](http://healthliteracymn.org)