Health Literacy 101: Increasing Literacy Reduces Health Disparities

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**Health Literacy 101:**

**Increasing Literacy Reduces Health Disparities**

**Why does Health Literacy Matter?**

It’s needed to effectively:

- Fill out a patient information form
- Follow discharge instructions
- Manage medications
- Care for a loved one’s health
- Keep appointments
- Select and understand insurance
- Identify signs and warning labels
- Research health information
- Sign consent forms

Low Health Literacy leads to:

- Underutilization of services
- Increased medication errors
- Poor understanding of health
- Increased ER visits and hospitalizations
- Poor health outcomes
- Increased healthcare costs for all

**Communication tools:**

- Plain language
- Easy-to-understand materials
- Questions & self advocacy
- Teach-back technique
- Visual and audio resources
- Cultural competence

**What is Health Literacy?**

The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health care decisions.

- Basic: 29%
- Intermediate: 44%
- Proficient: 13%
- Below Basic: 14%

From the National Assessment of Adult Literacy in 2003

From Pfizer Clear Health Communication, 2012

“...understand and act on health information”

- Two Sides to the Story

Both sides are responsible for clear communication

“Health disparities are preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by socially disadvantaged populations.”

- CDC, 2013

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- Healthy People 2010

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