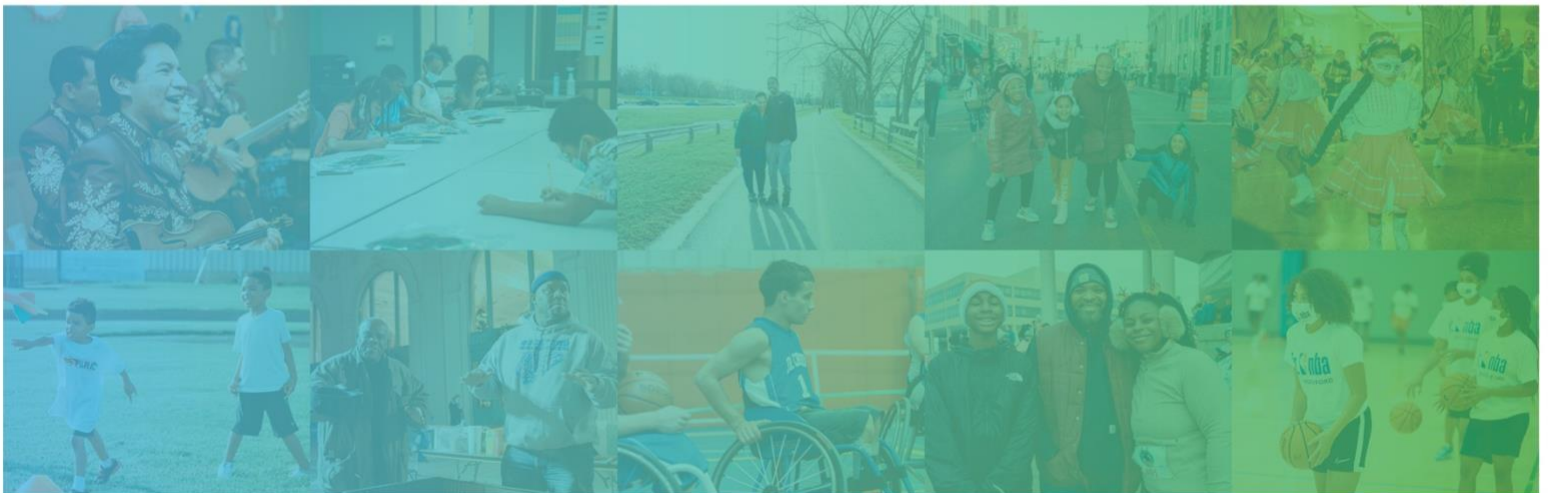




ROCKFORD READY

healthier tomorrows start today

A Health Literacy Toolkit for Individuals



rockfordready.org





Introduction

One of the best ways to take control of your health is by improving your health literacy. Health literacy is your ability to access, understand and apply health information and health services in your everyday life. Health literacy includes asking your doctor clarifying questions during your visit, or getting regular health screenings. This toolkit was developed to help you improve your health literacy. Read it to take your health in your hands!

Led by the City of Rockford Health and Human Services Department, Rockford Ready is an initiative dedicated to improving the health of all Rockford residents by providing health education, connecting residents to health resources and strengthening relationships between health care providers and residents.

In partnership with the University of Illinois Chicago, College of Medicine, Office of Health Literacy and UIC College of Medicine Rockford, and trusted leaders in Rockford, we are an initiative for the community, by the community.

Up-to-date COVID-19 recommendations change frequently. Please be sure to check out the links within the Digital resource section to find the most recent COVID-19 recommendations.

This program is led by the City of Rockford, in partnership with the University of Illinois Chicago, College of Medicine, Office of Health Literacy and UIC College of Medicine Rockford as well as CURA Strategies. This program is supported by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health/Office of Minority Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$3,614,521 with 100 percent funded by the OASH/OMH/HHS. The contents

are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by the OASH/OMH/HHS. For more information, please visit <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov>.

Photos provided by Rockford Park District and Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau. Updated as of 06/23/2023.

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What is health literacy?

Health literacy is when someone understands information and learns how to make the best decision for their health⁹.

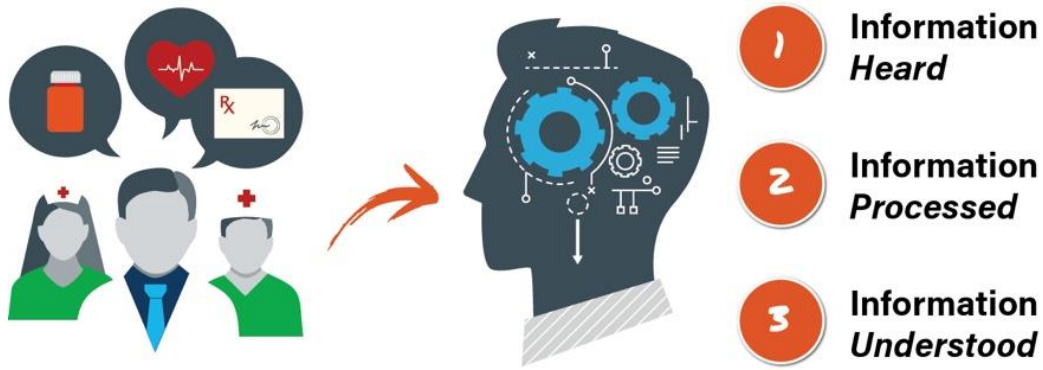


Figure 1 Source: [36]

Health literacy skills are necessary to understand:

 Medical terms and human biology	 Health care issues that impact your community during local elections	 Self-care guidelines
 Diagnosis and test results	 Risks and benefits of a treatment or medication	 Complicated health systems

Source: [11]

People with low health literacy are more likely to experience the following:

 Death	 Emergency room visits	 Incorrectly taking medicines
 Hospitalization	 Making poor decisions about treatment	 Poor disease outcomes

Source: [11]

The application of health literacy skills requires a variety of other skills:



Visual literacy



Computer literacy



Information literacy



Numerical literacy



Verbal
Communication



Decision-making

Source: [11]

Why is health literacy important in the context of COVID-19?

It's good to have health literacy because you can:



- Find places to get more information
- Talk with health care professionals who can help you
- Better understand the health information and services you receive
- Decide what actions are best for your health

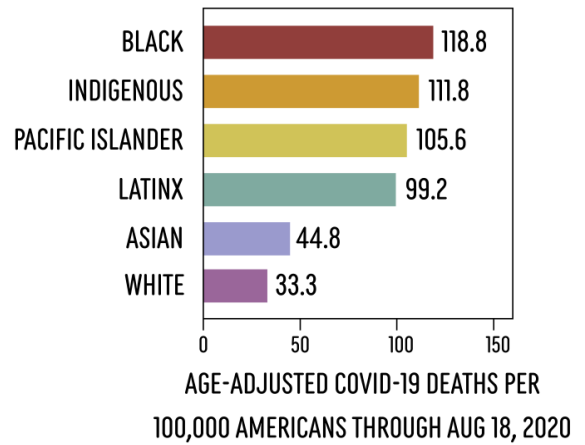
Source: [11]

A lot of people who do not have high health literacy had a hard time in the COVID-19 pandemic. It was hard for them to understand medical words used by health professionals like “immunocompromised”. People who did not have high health literacy missed out on important information that could have saved their lives.¹²

People with high health literacy understand why it's beneficial to take the COVID-19 vaccine. When you have good health literacy, it's easier to know the difference between true and false information.¹⁴

Which communities are vulnerable to COVID-19?

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) were hit harder by COVID-19.¹



Compared to White people,²



Black or African American people are:

2 times more likely to go to the hospital because of COVID-19.

1.6 times more likely to die because of COVID-19.

Hispanic or Latino people are:

1.8 times more likely to go to the hospital because of COVID-19.

1.7 times more likely to die because of COVID-19.



Black, Indigenous, and People of Color are more likely to¹:



Not have access
to testing



Live in
high-density areas



Be exposed
to pollution



Have a pre-existing
condition



Be an essential
worker

Even though Black and Latinx communities have been greatly affected by COVID-19 and would benefit from getting the vaccine, we have seen low vaccination numbers among these groups.³

With greater education and equal access to the vaccine, we can reduce the impact of COVID-19 on BIPOC communities.

How has COVID-19 affected Winnebago County and the nation?

In Winnebago County

As of August 2021, people who live in the Winnebago County were under a “Warning” level because of the level of COVID-19 spread in the county.²³

Click on the map to check the COVID-19 rate in your county³⁸:



The racial/ethnic makeup of Winnebago County is²³:

- White: 74%
- Black/African American: 12%
- Hispanic/Latino: 11%
- Asian: 3%

Source: Rockford Park District & Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

24% of all COVID-19 cases in are Black/African (as of 3/29/21).

18% of all COVID-19 cases Hispanic/Latino (as of 3/29/21).²⁸

In the United States

American Indians/Alaska Native, Black, and Hispanics/Latino people are more likely to be hospitalized because of COVID-19.

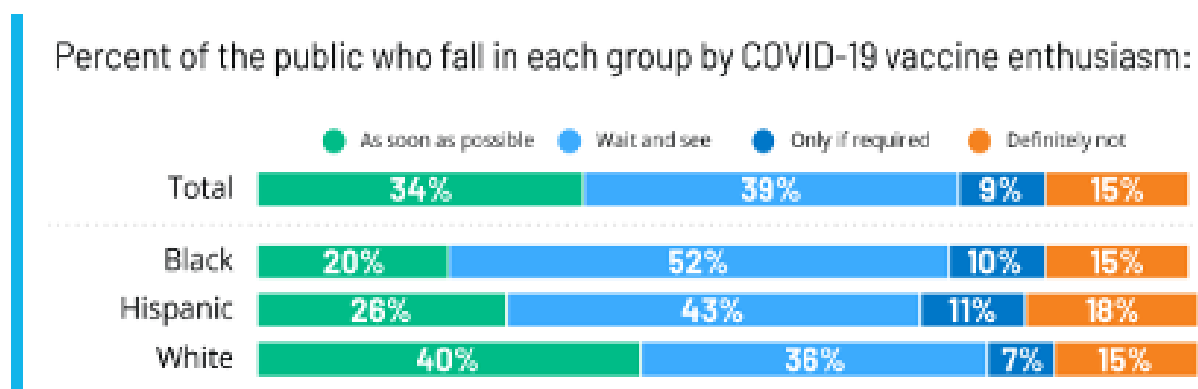


People without health insurance, with family incomes below the federal poverty level and who don't have "work-from-home" options are more likely to die from COVID-19.²²

Why do people hesitate to take the COVID-19 vaccine?

More people are willing to take the vaccine today, but we still see more hesitation in the Black and Latinx communities than in White communities.⁶

The graph below shows the percent of people willing to take the vaccines as soon as possible, people who choose to wait and see first before taking the vaccine, people who only take the vaccine if it's required and people who will never take the vaccine:



Source: [6]

NOTE: Different people have different reasons to be unsure of the vaccine!

Some reasons why people are hesitant to take the vaccines are⁶:

- Being afraid of the vaccine and what it may do to them
- Some vaccines are too new and they don't know much about it
- Worried they will get COVID-19 from the vaccine itself
- Don't trust how the vaccine is made⁷

People are also hesitant to take the COVID-19 vaccine because they don't trust the information they see and where the information comes from.⁸



If you are someone who is hesitant to take the vaccine, one way you can change that is by improving your health literacy to make the best choice for your health!

Check out the resources we've outlined in the next few pages for information about COVID-19 that you can trust.

Resources



The [COVID-19 Health Literacy Project](#) creates and translates accessible COVID-19 information into different languages. Materials are created in collaboration with Harvard Health Publishing.



The [How to Be Clear During COVID-19 Cheatsheet](#) is a plain language document that highlights important terms to use to improve patient understanding. For example, instead of saying “novel strain,” say “a new type of virus.”

[Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)



The American Medical Association has created [Health Literacy Resources on Inequities & for Non-English Speakers](#) in order to raise awareness about health equity in the context of COVID-19. The page also highlights actions and tools that can be used to advance health equity at multiple levels, including patient-focused resources.



The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) has put together a resource for [Social Determinants of Health \(SDOH\) Tools](#) that is categorized by individual SDOH and structural SDOH. Protocol topics include health literacy, health numeracy, access to health technology, social vulnerability and more.



[Illinois Unidos](#) is a consortium of over 100 Latino elected and appointed officials, together with health professionals and representatives of community-based organizations. The initiative aims to present one united voice in stopping the growth of COVID-19 in Illinois communities while addressing related public health issues. The website provides resources for families and individuals related to health, housing, food, and immigration, in addition to offering many downloadable COVID-19 health information flyers in both English and Spanish.



The Society for Health Communication's [Health Communication Resources for the COVID-19 Response](#) includes tips for communicating about COVID-19, addressing myths and misinformation, and more.



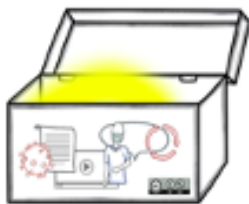
Action for Healthy Kids has partnered with Kaiser Permanente to create a [COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence Toolkit](#) to distribute information to districts, schools, and families regarding vaccination against COVID-19. Kaiser Permanente is a trusted source of information that is easy to understand and accessible to families. Content includes guides, tips, and videos



The Department of Health and Human Services has created a [Parents Toolkit](#) with resources for organizations and individuals that want to help increase confidence in uptake of COVID-19 vaccines among children and adolescents and their parents/guardians. The toolkit is regularly updated with new materials.



The Health Literacy Solutions Center’s [COVID-19 Resource Library](#) offers a collection of 280+ resources that explain complex COVID-19-related topics in plain language. The collection is continually updated.



The [COVID-19 Communication Kit](#) is a free resource that contains ready-made media designed to give communicators a head start in explaining new policies and procedures. Includes images, ready-made videos, PowerPoint presentations, templates, and workbooks.



The Office of the U.S. Surgeon General has released [A Community Toolkit for Addressing Health Misinformation](#) to offer specific guidance to individuals, healthcare professionals and administrators, educators, librarians, and faith leaders to understand, identify, and stop the spread of health misinformation.



The [COVID Ready Communication Playbook](#) guide includes practical advice about how to talk about difficult topics related to COVID-19. Translated into many languages, including Spanish. Material is created by VitalTalk, a non-profit social impact organization, with input from over 80 clinicians from across the globe.

Trustworthy sources for COVID-19 Data



[CDC - Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)



[HHS - Department of Health and Human Services](#)



[FDA - U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#)



[IDPH - Illinois Department of Public Health](#)



Winnebago County

Health Department

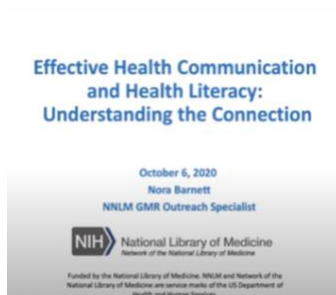
[WCHD – Winnebago County Health Department](#)

Video Resources



[Fact Check: 7 Myths About COVID-19 Vaccines](#)

from UChicago Medicine



[Effective Health Communication and Health Literacy: Understanding the Connection](#)

from the National Library of Medicine



[The Increased Importance of Effective Health Literacy Communications Since COVID-19](#)

from Maximus



[Addressing Health Misinformation through Health Literacy Practices](#)

from The National Academy of Medicine

About Us

Rockford Ready believes that a healthier tomorrow for all residents starts with healthy practices today. Through our initiative, we encourage residents to take an active role in their health by providing information that helps Rockford residents understand how to navigate the health care system and how to access the care they need.

Through partnerships with local health care systems, community organizations, local churches and community health advocates, Rockford Ready will host and support health education and awareness events, communicate with residents online and provide accurate and timely health resources.



For more information, please contact Rockford Ready at RockfordReady@rockfordil.gov

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