

A Health Literacy Guide developed by the Rockford Regional Health Council and Rockford Ready:



Rockford Ready is a program 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 and 100 percent funded by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health/Office of Minority Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (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>.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the program.



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ROCKFORD READY

healthier tomorrows start today

HEALTH LITERACY

The Path to Patient Empowerment



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WHY HEALTH LITERACY?

Every day, a Rockford resident walks into your health system and becomes a patient.

Individual beliefs, attitudes and behaviors associated with receiving care can vary based on the individual's racial or ethnic background, socioeconomic status, English proficiency and more!

These factors can also limit the patient's ability to communicate effectively, potentially resulting in negative health outcomes. Low health literacy levels in Rockford increase the risk of poor health outcomes, obstruct health systems from providing effective care and create higher costs for everyone involved. In fact, nationally, \$3.4 billion in annual administrative costs are associated with low health literacy.¹ Fortunately, you can exercise everyday health literacy strategies to ensure your patients leave every interaction feeling empowered.

Health Literacy 101

Personal Health Literacy: The degree to which an individual can obtain, understand and learn how to use information to make the best decision for their health.²

Organizational Health Literacy: A skillset that helps organizations provide people equitable access to information and services so people may make the best health decisions for themselves and others.²



Informally assess a patient's risk for low health literacy by observing the following:

Responses to receiving written information⁴:

- "I forgot my glasses. I'll read this when I get home."
- "I forgot my glasses. Can you read this to me?"
- "Let me bring this home so I can discuss it with my children."
- "I will take it home to read."

Behaviors⁴:

- Registration forms that are incomplete or inaccurately completed
- Frequently missed appointments
- Decreased adherence with programs/ recommendations
- Lack of follow-up in applying, contacting, and locating services provided by a program



Health Literacy Skills Are Necessary to Understand:⁴

- 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
- Complex health systems

Poor Health Literacy Is Associated With a Higher Risk of:

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

HEALTH LITERACY STRATEGIES

Approaches you can use with every patient, every time.



Address each patient by name and make eye contact when speaking—do not turn your back.⁴



Practice cultural humility with patients by being kind, curious and meeting the patient where they're at.³



Present information to a patient in plain language (avoid excessive medical terminology) and use teaching methods that work for them (physical models, videos, pictures, etc.).⁵



Ask the patient to confirm they understand the procedure by asking them to repeat back your instruction in their own words, also known as the "teach-back" method, when introducing a new procedure or new information.⁵

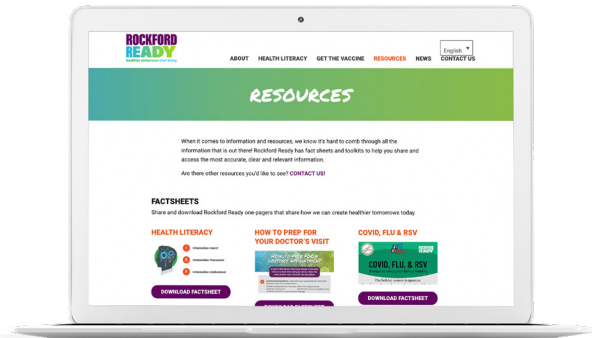


Encourage patient engagement by asking open-ended questions.⁵



Ask the patient if they have any questions or concerns, then summarize key points before ending a visit.⁵

Resources: Your One-Stop Source for Health Literacy Information



Would you like to learn more about using health literacy to empower patients and equitably improve health outcomes? Look no further!



Scan the QR code or visit us at rockfordready.org/resources for more health literacy resources.



Have Questions?
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¹ Accenture Health Hidden Cost of Healthcare System Complexity. (2018). <https://www.accenture.com/content/dam/accenture/final/a-com-migration/r3-3/pdf/pdf-104/accenture-health-hidden-cost-of-healthcare-system-complexity.pdf#zoom=50>.

² Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (n.d.). *History of Health Literacy Definitions*. Health.gov. <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/health-literacy-healthy-people-2030/history-health-literacy-definitions>.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, August 8). Embrace cultural humility and community engagement. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/global/health/equity/guide/cultural-humility.html>.

⁴ Neilsen-Bohlman, L., Panzer, A. M., & Kindig, D. A. (2004). *Health Literacy: A Prescription to End Confusion*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

⁵ Weiss, B. D. (2003). *Health Literacy: A Manual for Clinicians*. American Medical Association and American Medical Association Foundation. Retrieved from <http://lib.ncfh.org/pdfs/6617.pdf>.