

# HEALTH LITERACY

## The Path to Patient Empowerment

**ROCKFORD  
READY**  
healthier tomorrows start today

### What Is Health Literacy?

Health literacy is the degree to which your patient can **access, understand and apply** basic health information and services needed to make optimal health decisions.<sup>1</sup>



1

**Information Heard**

2

**Information Processed**

3

**Information Understood**

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

Each patient's experience is informed by their individual beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, racial or ethnic background, socioeconomic status, English proficiency and more! In some cases, these factors can limit the patient's ability to access, understand and apply health information and potentially result in inequitable health outcomes. Fortunately, you can exercise everyday health literacy strategies to ensure your patients leave every interaction feeling empowered.

## 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.<sup>3</sup>



Encourage patient engagement by asking open-ended questions.<sup>4</sup>



Practice cultural humility with patients by being kind, curious and meeting the patient where they're at.<sup>2</sup>



Ask the patient if they have any questions or concerns, then summarize key points before ending a visit.<sup>4</sup>



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.).<sup>4</sup>



Have the patient 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.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (n.d.). History of Health Literacy Definitions. Health.gov. <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/health-literacy-healthypeople-2030/history-health-literacy-definitions>.

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022, August 8). Embrace cultural humility and community engagement. Retrieved from [https://www.cdc.gov/global-health-equity/php/publications/cultural-humility.html?CDC\\_AAref\\_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/equity/guide/cultural-humility.html](https://www.cdc.gov/global-health-equity/php/publications/cultural-humility.html?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/equity/guide/cultural-humility.html).

<sup>3</sup> Neilsen-Bohman, L., Panzer, A. M., & Kindig, D. A. (2004). Health Literacy: A Prescription to End Confusion. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

<sup>4</sup> 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>.

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