

Iowa Total Care Quick Reference Guide: Health Literacy

Iowa Total Care is committed to providing healthcare services in a competent manner. This guide will cover information on health literacy and the two methods of communication that should be used: plain talk/plain language and the teach-back method.

What is health literacy?

Health literacy is the ability to obtain, read, understand, and use healthcare information in order to make appropriate health decisions and follow instructions for treatment. It is being able to understand and take the right action to make good health choices.

Low health literacy is a barrier to:

- Caring for a member's family.
- Reading prescription information.
- Getting important health alerts.
- Making informed health decisions.
- Preventing disease.
- Peace of mind.

Low health literacy is linked to¹:



Increased visits to emergency room



Less likely to follow treatment



Increased hospital stays



Higher mortality rates



9 out of 10 Americans have limited health literacy¹



½ of US adults have low health literacy²

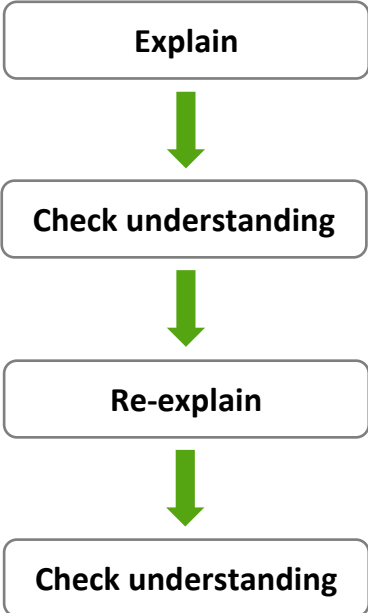


⅔ of older adults do not understand basic health information²



Patients with low health literacy **cost four times as much** as patients with high health literacy²

Talking Method	Guidelines																												
<p>Plain Talk / Plain Language</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is plain language in healthcare? Plain language means just that: speaking in language that is clear and easy to understand. • Why is using plain language important in healthcare? Plain language makes it easier for everyone to understand and use health information. • Examples of plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Short sentences and paragraphs. – Common, everyday words. – Easy-to-follow design features and graphics (lists, headers, tables). <p>Plain Language: Use Plain Words³</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="443 882 1206 1560"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="443 882 824 940">DON'T USE</th> <th data-bbox="824 882 1206 940">USE THESE</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Utilize</td><td>Use</td></tr> <tr><td>Advise</td><td>Recommend</td></tr> <tr><td>Approximately</td><td>About</td></tr> <tr><td>Ensure</td><td>Make sure</td></tr> <tr><td>Accordingly</td><td>So</td></tr> <tr><td>Participate</td><td>Take part in</td></tr> <tr><td>Failed to</td><td>Didn't</td></tr> <tr><td>Anticipate</td><td>Expect</td></tr> <tr><td>Numerous</td><td>Many</td></tr> <tr><td>Assist</td><td>Help, aid</td></tr> <tr><td>Sufficient</td><td>Enough</td></tr> <tr><td>Accomplish</td><td>Carry out, do</td></tr> <tr><td>Finalize</td><td>Finish, end</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	DON'T USE	USE THESE	Utilize	Use	Advise	Recommend	Approximately	About	Ensure	Make sure	Accordingly	So	Participate	Take part in	Failed to	Didn't	Anticipate	Expect	Numerous	Many	Assist	Help, aid	Sufficient	Enough	Accomplish	Carry out, do	Finalize	Finish, end
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<p>Teach-Back</p>	<p>What is the teach-back method? The teach-back method is a way of checking understanding by asking patients to state in their own words what they need to know or do about their health. It is a way to confirm that you have explained things in a manner your patients understand.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="width: 45%;">  <pre> graph TD A[Explain] --> B[Check understanding] B --> C[Re-explain] C --> D[Check understanding] </pre> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <table border="1" data-bbox="828 520 1450 993"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" style="background-color: #2e7d32; color: white;">Seven Tips for Clinicians⁴</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="width: 20px; text-align: center;">1.</td> <td>Use plain language.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">2.</td> <td>Limit information (three to five key points).</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">3.</td> <td>Be specific and concrete, not general.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">4.</td> <td>Demonstrate, draw pictures, use models.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">5.</td> <td>Repeat/summarize.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">6.</td> <td>Teach-back (confirm understanding).</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">7.</td> <td>Be positive, hopeful, empowering.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div> </div>	Seven Tips for Clinicians ⁴		1.	Use plain language.	2.	Limit information (three to five key points).	3.	Be specific and concrete, not general.	4.	Demonstrate, draw pictures, use models.	5.	Repeat/summarize.	6.	Teach-back (confirm understanding).	7.	Be positive, hopeful, empowering.
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Health Inequity

Structural racism operates through laws and policies that allocate resources in ways that disempower and devalue members of racial and ethnic minority groups, resulting in inequitable access to high quality care. One of the most visible examples of this is health inequity.

Systemic Health Disparities

Health disparities are preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by populations that have been disadvantaged by their social or economic status, geographic location, and environment.

Health Equity

The state in which everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their highest level of health.

Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)

The conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, and pray. These include factors like status, education, ZIP code, employment and social support networks.

Health Disparities

Preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence or opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by socially disadvantaged populations. Many factors contribute to health disparities including genetics; access to care; poor quality of care; and SDOH: poverty, access to food, support systems, environmental conditions (e.g., lead paint, mold, dust, poor air quality), language barriers and health behaviors.

Resources

- Healthwise
<https://www.healthwise.org>
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
<https://www.cdc.gov>
- National Institutes of Health
<https://www.nih.gov>
- Rural Health Information Hub
<https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org>

Sources

1. Why Improving Health Literacy Is Important
https://www.csrwire.com/press_releases/737361-why-improving-health-literacy-important
2. Health Literacy – Not All Patient Education Is Created Equal
<https://www.healthwise.org/blog/health-literacy-and-patient-education.aspx>
3. The Power of Plain Language
<https://www.capio.org/post/power-plain-language>
4. Rural Health Literacy: Understanding Skills and Demands Is Key to Improvement
<https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/rural-monitor/rural-health-literacy/ahrq-health-literacy-tips>