



# HEALTH LITERACY *FOR THE WIN!*

# Today's topics

- What the heck is “health literacy”?
- Talking with your health-care team
- Working with your health-care team
- Taking medicines safely
- Five things you can do!



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# Who's on your health-care team?

Doctor

Nurse  
Practitioner

Nurse

Dentist

Dietitian



Physician's  
Assistant

Pharmacist

Social Worker

Therapists

And  
many  
more



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# What is “health literacy”?



# What is health literacy?

“Health literacy allows the public and personnel working in all health-related contexts to find, understand, evaluate, communicate, and use information.”



# What is health literacy?

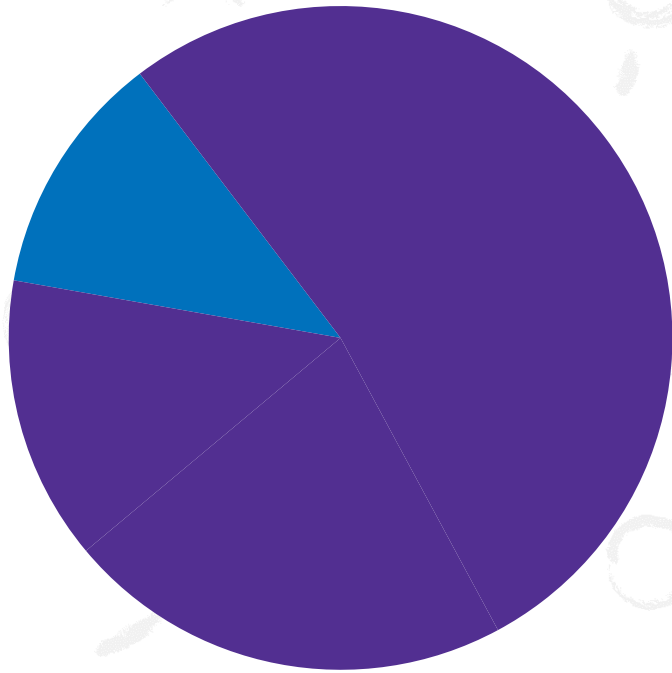
Health Literacy is...

our ability to **read, understand,**  
and **act on** health information.



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# Health literacy: a universal problem



**Only 12%** of adults are  
**proficient** in  
understanding health  
information



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# Low health literacy may lead to...

- Poorer health knowledge
- Poorer health status
- Higher mortality
- Increased hospital use
- Increased Emergency Department use
- Mixed results for:
  - Use of preventive services
  - Chronic health care
  - Tobacco use



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# Dealing with health literacy in real life

- Strange words
- Talking with your health-care team
- Not knowing how to ask questions
- Paperwork



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# Health literacy includes...

- Finding health information
- Understanding it
- Evaluating it
- Communicating it
- Taking medication the right way
- Knowing what to do when you get home from an appointment
- Using it and acting on it to live longer and better!



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# Real life example: Finding your way through a hospital

**X-RAY**



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# Real life example: Finding your way through a hospital

**J.T. Boldrick**  
**Radiology Department**



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# Real life example: Understanding prescription bottles



Davis TC , et al. Annals Int Med 2006



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# Remember!

Everyone has issues with “health literacy” at some point in their life.

**We can do something to increase our health literacy!**



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# Talking with your health-care team



# Some words you expect to be hard:

- Hypertension
- Angina
- Stethoscope
- Cholecystectomy



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# Other words are not always what they seem!

- Negative
- Stool
- Diet
- Fast/Fasting



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# What can you do?



**Ask  
questions!**



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# Ask me 3 questions

- What's my main problem?
- What do I need to do about it?
- Why is it important?



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# Build your question list

- To address more specific questions
- To break the ice, ask if it is OK to ask questions
- Think about how you ask questions



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# Work with your health-care team



# Tips

- **Be prepared.**
  - Know medicines, allergies, and health conditions
  - Write questions down in advance
  - Be able to explain your main concern
- **Share your question list at the start of the visit.**



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# Tips

- **Tell your story.**
- **All details matter.**
  - Supplements
  - Herbals
  - Over-the-counter medications  
*(medicines you don't need a prescription for)*
- **Be honest.**
  - Diet
  - Activity
  - Alcohol
  - Smoking
  - Not taking medication



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# Remember what they told you and what to do after

- Remember what was said.
- Bring someone with you.
- Take notes.
  - Record the visit.
  - Write on your question list.
- Know what to do after you leave.
- Ask for handouts, videos, or web sites.
- Know whom to call.



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# Taking medicines safely

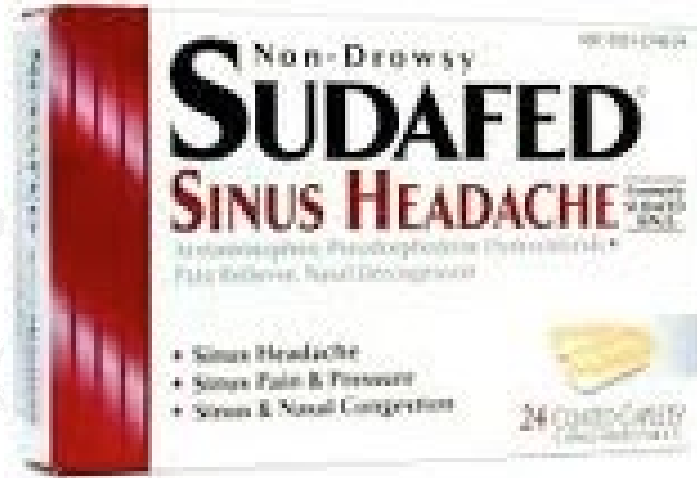




# Over-the-counter medications

- The sheer number of “over-the-counter medicines” is in itself overwhelming.
- How many of you are familiar with the term “over the counter”?
- It means medicines that you don’t need a prescription to get, and there are a lot of them out there.
  - Things like pain killers and cough medicines and antacids along with vitamins and supplements.
- Remember that pharmacists can help you find medicines – even over-the-counter medicines. They can help you figure out which one of the many is best for your particular situation.  
Just ask!





# Final medicine tips:

- Keep a list of your medicines
- Talk to your pharmacist
- Be careful with liquid medications
- For each of your medicines, know:
  - Name of the medicine
  - How to take
  - When to take
  - How much to take



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# Medicine tips

- How long to keep taking
- Why to take
- How you will know it's working
- Are there side effects?
- Can you safely cut it in half?



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# Five things you can do



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# Five things you can do

1. Write down your questions.
2. Really talk with your health-care team.
3. Make a list of your medicines.
4. Share what you've learned.
5. Be patient with yourself as you build your health literacy!



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**Health literacy is everyone's job  
– you and your health-care team  
all need to play together to win!**

**You!**



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**Thank you for coming!**

**Time for questions and sharing.**





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# HEALTH LITERACY KENTUCKY

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