

# Enhancing Effective Communication: Health Literacy

October  
is  
Health Literacy  
Month

Health Literacy is the degree to which individuals can understand, communicate and act upon health information. It is essential for successful access to care and use of services and maintenance of health and wellness.

## Individuals with low health literacy:

- Have less knowledge about their health.
- Have difficulty accessing and navigating the health care system.
- Have more hospitalizations.
- Make more medication or treatment errors.
- Typically have poor health outcomes.

## How can we partner with our patients to enhance health literacy?

- Help patients feel comfortable by treating them with dignity and respect and encouraging them to talk openly.
- Sit down to achieve eye level with your patients, and listen to what they have to say.
- Ask the patient's preferred language to discuss healthcare.
- Speak in plain language and avoid medical jargon.
- Use visual models to explain a procedure or condition.
- Ask patients to "teach back" the information you give them and document success.

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To learn more about health literacy  
you can attend the following events:

- **Health Literacy: Using Communication to Create Health Literate Documents on October 12, 9am-11am in the Boardroom.**
  - **Health Literacy Awareness Table in the cafeteria on October 18, 11am-2pm.**
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