



How to speak clearly to your patients

What is health literacy?

Health literacy is the intersection of communication factors that affect health.

Factors that impact health literacy



Health care professionals

Competing demands and diverse levels of communication skills



People

Diverse levels of communication skills and knowledge about health topics



Health care system

Complexity of the health care system, built environment, culture of medicine, language barriers, policies & procedures, and funding

Skills mismatch

There's a mismatch between what it takes to use health care and the health literacy skills we have. This mismatch results in poor outcomes and more expensive care.

How can I use plain language?

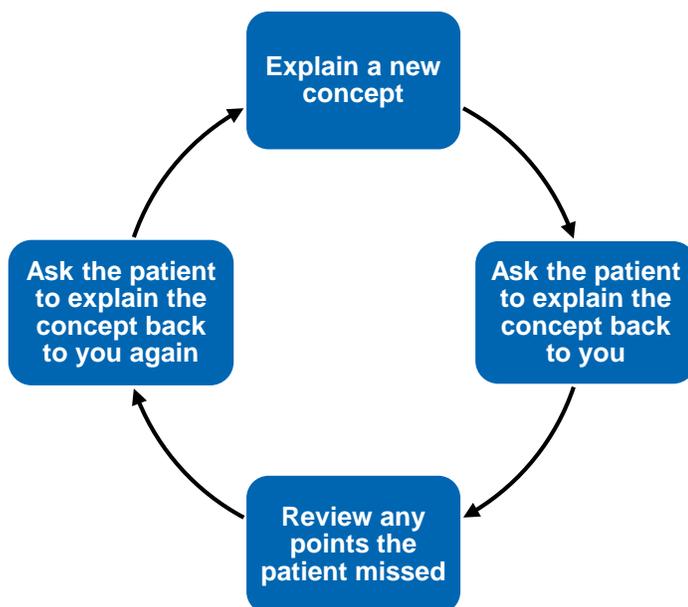
- 1 Avoid jargon or explain it clearly**
 - Replace the jargon with a common word or phrase
 - Give a simple explanation for technical words that can't be replaced easily
- 2 Focus on the 3 most important points**
 - Give the most important information first
 - Share “need-to-know” information instead of “nice-to-know” information

Complex word	Common word or explanation
Tactile	Touch, feeling
Manage	Take care of

How can I check for understanding?

- 1 Use the Teach-back method**
 - Start Teach-back with a phrase that lets your patient know your goal is to check how well you explained information:
 - “We’ve covered a lot of information. I want to make sure I explained it clearly.”
 - Ask for Teach-back with open-ended questions. For example:
 - “What are 3 symptoms that mean you need to call your doctor?”

The Teach-back method



How can I build relationships with my patients?

- 1 Summarize what your patient said** to make sure you understood correctly.
 - Gather together what has been said
 - Use a phrase such as “What I’m hearing is...”
- 2 Reflect the patient’s feelings** to show you are listening and understand how they feel.
 - Listen to what the patient is saying
 - Identify the underlying emotion
 - Verbally acknowledge the emotion

What I’m hearing is...

It sounds like you’re saying...

It sounds like you may be feeling...