

# Facts About HEALTH LITERACY

Health literacy means having the necessary skills to make decisions that can positively impact your health.

**9 in 10**

adult Americans have limited health literacy



People with limited health literacy are more likely to:



Have chronic conditions and trouble managing them



Avoid important medical tests



Have higher rates of hospital and emergency room visits

Even people with strong literacy skills can face health literacy challenges—such as when they:



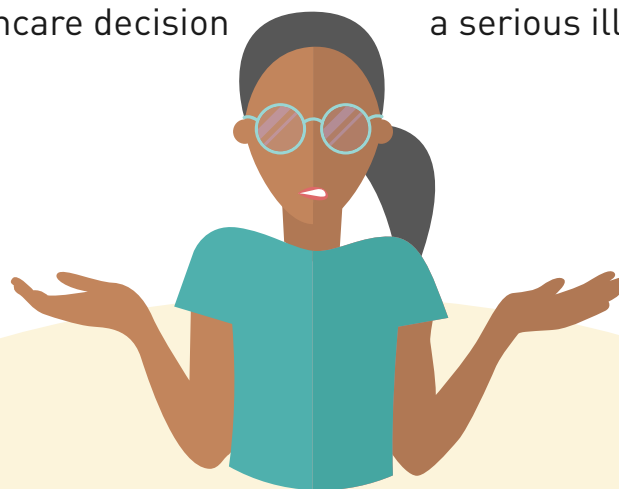
Have to understand numbers or risks before making a healthcare decision



Become frightened or confused when they learn they have a serious illness



Aren't familiar with medical terms or how the body works



Have to self-manage a complex medical condition

“If you can't speak the same language as the doctors, if you don't know the medical terms, then you can't really participate in their care as much as you possibly should be.”

— Caregiver for a patient

Steps you can take to improve your health literacy include:

Ask your healthcare provider these 3 questions:

- 1 What is my main health problem?
- 2 What do I need to do?
- 3 Why is it important for me to do this?



Make sure you understand what your healthcare provider tells you. When in doubt, ask questions.



If English isn't your first language, tell your healthcare provider. Ask for a translator and for educational materials that are in your preferred language.

