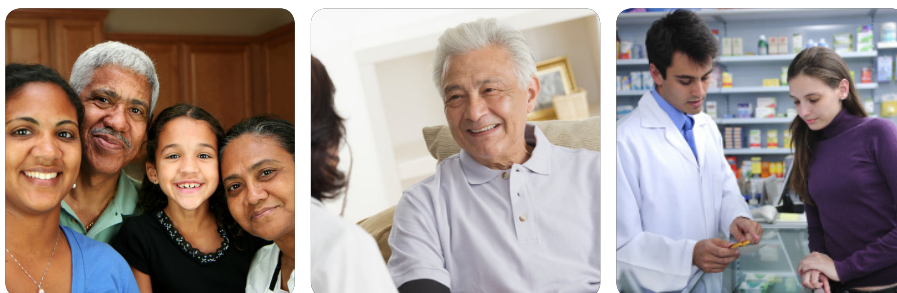




Health Literacy: Why is it important for me?

For patients, families and caregivers



Have you ever been confused by what your doctor is saying?

Have you ever asked a question of your health provider and not understood the answer?

Have you ever not asked a question because you were anxious or embarrassed?

You are not alone.

Many Canadians have trouble acting on health information or taking control of their health.

Please visit the UHN Patient Education website for more health information: www.uhnpatienteducation.ca
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What is health literacy?

Health literacy means using many different skills to get, understand, communicate and use information to make informed decisions about your health and navigate the health care system.

For example, you are using health literacy skills when you:

- follow instructions for taking your medicines
- prepare before a test or surgery
- act on medical advice and filling out medical forms
- understand treatments and medical terms
- find and use health information
- know where to go to get health services from home or in the community
- ask questions and advocating for yourself or your family member

Stress or how you're feeling can affect your ability to understand and act on health information.

Why is health literacy important to me?

The better your health literacy, the better you will be able to manage your health and move through the health care system.

Many people need to manage their health condition or take care of someone else who has one.

Health literacy applies to everyone.

What can you do? to address health literacy



You can improve your health literacy by using some of the **tips** below.

What can your health care provider do?



Health care providers can give information that is **clear** and helps people **act** on what they receive.



Tips to improve your health literacy

When you visit with your health care provider:

- ✓ Bring your questions so you can remember everything. Write down what your provider tells you.
- ✓ Bring all of your medicines, including vitamins and any over-the-counter or herbal remedies.
- ✓ If you can, bring a family member or trusted friend along to help you remember what your health care provider says.
- ✓ Ask questions if you do not understand. If you still are not sure about the message, ask your health care provider to repeat using everyday language.
- ✓ Repeat the health information you receive in your own words.
- ✓ Ask your health care team for an interpreter if you prefer to communicate with your health care provider in a language other than English.
- ✓ Ask your health care provider about signing up for myUHN Patient Portal where you can see your health record and appointment information.

What questions do I ask?

Be sure your health care provider answers these questions before you leave your visit:

What is my main problem?

What do I need to do?

Why is it important for me to do this?

(From **Ask Me 3**)

Looking for reliable health information?

**Visit the UHN Patient & Family Libraries and Resource Centres.
Contact them to request reliable consumer health information.**

[Princess Margaret Cancer Centre](#)

Email: patienteducationpmh@uhn.ca

[Toronto Rehab](#)

Email: torontorehabhealthinfo@uhn.ca

[Toronto General Hospital](#)

Email: tgpen@uhn.ca

[Toronto Western Hospital](#)

Email: twpfl@uhn.ca

Visit www.uhnpatienteducation.ca for reliable health information, links to health websites, E-Books and other tools to help you.