

HEALTH LITERACY IN CLINICAL PRACTICE

A GUIDE FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Partners:





What is Health Literacy?

Health literacy refers to the ability of individuals to understand basic health information and make informed decisions about their health. Limited health literacy can lead to poor health outcomes, increased healthcare costs, and lower quality of life.

How big the problem is?

Health Literacy is essential in clinical practice to improve the quality-of-care clients receive. Unfortunately, almost one in two individuals in Europe has Limited Health Literacy.

Why is Identifying Clients with Limited Health Literacy Important?

Identifying clients with limited health literacy is important because it allows healthcare providers to tailor their communication and support to meet the unique needs of each client. This can help to improve clients' outcomes and reduce healthcare costs.

How to Identify Clients with Limited Health Literacy

Be aware of LHL when clients show some of the following signs:

- Always late for appointments or no shows.
- Difficulty using instructions.
- Poorly formulating questions.
- Difficulty answering questions.
- Indicating complaints.
- Unable to name chronology.
- Not filling out forms correctly.

Most common excuses of clients with Limited Health Literacy:

Be aware of LHL when clients show some of the following signs:

- Sorry, I forgot my glasses.
- Could you fill out this for me, I write so illegibly.
- I'll fill it out at home
- I can't read because I'm word-blind.
- Sorry, I thought the appointment was tomorrow.

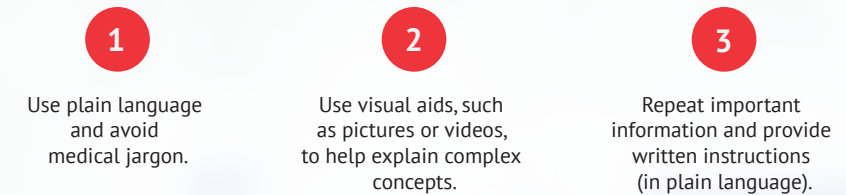
What to Do if You Identify a Client with Limited Health Literacy:

- Use plain language and avoid medical jargon.
- Use visual aids, such as pictures or videos, to help explain complex concepts.
- Repeat important information and provide written instructions (in plain language).
- Encourage patients to ask questions and always use the teach back method.
- Refer patients to additional resources, such as health educators or patient navigators, for additional support

How can you adapt your organization to clients with Limited Health Literacy?

- Train staff on health literacy and effective communication techniques, including the use of teach-back methods and visual aids.
- Identify patients with limited health literacy and point out their needs in the (inter)professional cooperation.
- Make sure that your written materials are easy to read and understand, including appointment reminders, and health education materials.
- Check that your organization is easy to navigate (finding rooms, departments, information...)

Ask me 3 - Checklist



Chunk and check

- Break down the information into smaller, more manageable chunks - rather than providing it all at once.
- In between each 'chunk', use methods such as teach back - to 'check' for understanding before moving on.
- Ask the client "which questions do you have?" in multiple occasions.

Teach back method

Tell: After explaining something slowly and in plain language, tell the client "I want to check if I explained it right".

Ask: Ask the client to tell you about the explanation in their own words.

Listen: Allow time for the client to respond and try not to interrupt.

Understanding?: Check if you have explained it in the right way.

Remember, this process is to evaluate yourself, not the patient!

Example:

"I told you what probably caused this pain. To check if I explained this clearly: "how would you explain the cause to someone else?"

