

Effective Health Communication & Health Literacy: Understanding The Connection

Katherine Chew

Research/Outreach Services Librarian

Health Sciences Library, University of Minnesota

Stacey Hendren

Library Manager

Northtown Library, Anoka County Minnesota



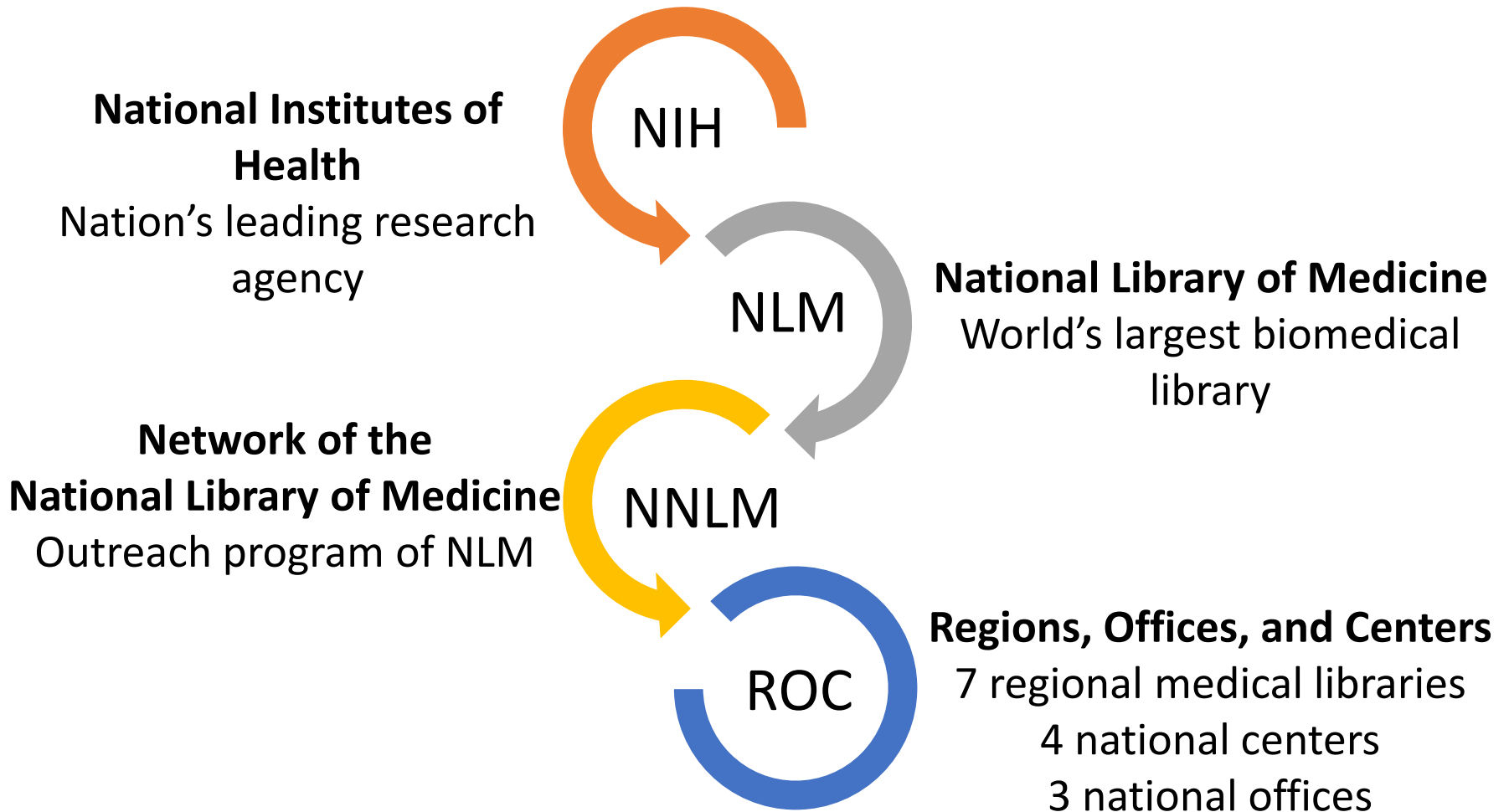
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Network of the National Library of Medicine

About today's session

- The session is being closed captioned and recorded.
- Please use the chat feature to ask questions or share comments as we go along. When sharing comments or questions, select “all participants.”
- You can adjust the size of your window using the plus and minus signs on the left.
- PPT slides, resource list, and a link to the recording will be made available following the presentation. The recording usually takes several weeks.
- The class is eligible for CHIS credit. A link to the class evaluation will be given at the end. When you complete the evaluation you will receive instructions on how to receive your credit.



Hierarchy of NIH, NLM, and NNLM



Objectives

- Define health literacy
- Describe universal precautions for health literacy
- Name 3 components of clear health communication
- Identify 3 online resources you can use as tools to promote health literacy



Agenda

- Introduction to Health Literacy/ Health Literacy: What It is and Why It Matters
- Health Literacy & Your Community
 - Communication
 - Print communication
 - Verbal communication
- Health Literacy Tools & Resources
 - MedlinePlus to promote health literacy
 - EthnoMed
 - Indian Health Service



What Is Literacy?

“Using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.”

This includes a combination of skills:

- Verbal
- Listening
- Writing
- reading



National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL 2003) <https://nces.ed.gov/naal/>



It's More Than Just Reading Grade Level



Prose Literacy:
Written text like instructions or articles.

Requires ability to search, comprehend, and use continuous text.



Document Or Graphical Literacy:
Short forms or graphically displayed information.

Non-continuous text.
Requires ability to search, comprehend, & use information.



Quantitative OR Numerical Literacy:
Arithmetic using numbers imbedded in print.

Requires ability to identify & perform computations, using numbers within printed materials.



What is Health Literacy?

Personal Health Literacy

The degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.

Organizational Health Literacy

The degree to which organizations equitably enable individuals to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.

[Healthy People 2030](#)



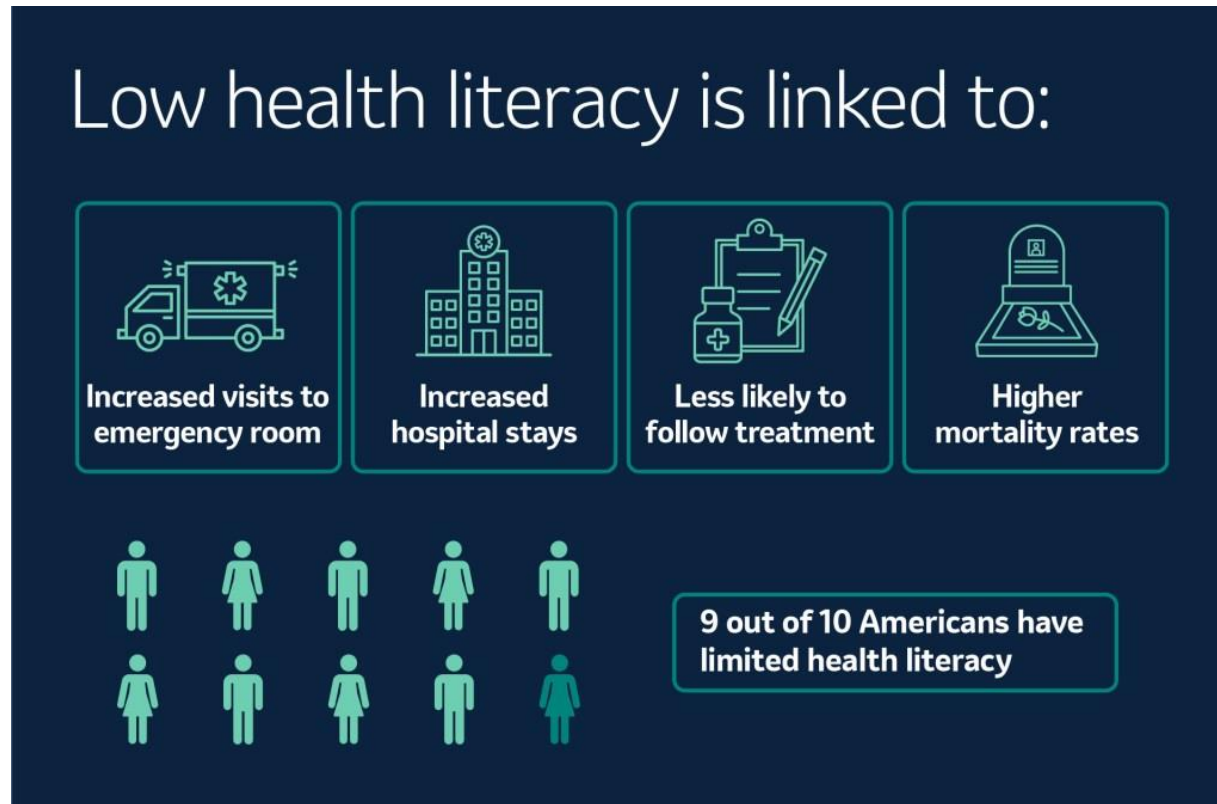
Shared responsibility

***Health literacy is a shared responsibility
between patients and providers***

Helen Osborne



Why is it important to address health literacy?



https://www.merck.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/124/2022/02/final_Health-Literacy-final.jpg



Health literacy is considered an essential life skill:

- To fill out a patient information forms
- To understand health-related instructions
- To follow discharge instructions
- To identify signs
- To keep appointments
- To understand insurance
- To sign consent forms



Risk factors for low health literacy

People with low health literacy are more likely to:

- Have a low-income level
- Have a chronic or severe health conditions
- Have a disability
- Be older adults (65+)
- Identify as a racial or ethnic minority
- Speak English as a second language
- Not have a high school degree or GED



HEALTH LITERACY & YOUR COMMUNITY



Communication

7 Things to Consider When Communicating About Health



www.cdc.gov/phpr



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https://www.cdc.gov/orr/infographics/oo_docs/communicatinghealth.pdf

Health Information Literacy

Health information literacy is the set of abilities needed to:

- recognize a health information need;
- identify likely information sources and use them to retrieve relevant information;
- assess the quality of the information and its applicability to a specific situation;
- and analyze, understand and use the information to make good health decisions.

MLA Task Force on Communicating Health Information Literacy. (2005).
Communicating Health Information Literacy. *Medical Library Association*



Role of the Library/Librarian

Libraries are in a strong position to advance the following multiple literacies to promote active health literacy through providing reliable and timely information on health topics.

- visual literacy,
- computer literacy,
- information literacy and
- numeric/computational literacy.



HEALTH LITERACY TOOLS & RESOURCES



Health Literacy Universal Precautions

You can't tell by looking

Assume that all patients and caregivers may
have difficulty comprehending health
information

Communicate in ways that anyone can
understand



AHRQ Universal Precautions Toolkit

AHRQ Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit



Second
Edition

The AHRQ Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit, 2nd edition, can help primary care practices reduce the complexity of health care, increase patient understanding of health information, and enhance support for patients of all health literacy levels.



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Clear Health Communication

Clear communication	Less clear communication
Plain language	Medical jargon
Simple messages	Complex messages
Need-to-know information (3 to 5 items)	Nice-to-know information
Anticipating misunderstanding	Assumes understanding
Confirming understanding	Infers understanding
Clarifying	Repeats the same thing (louder)
Objective, judgement free	Inadvertently shaming



Can you substitute another word(s) for easier understanding?

- Cardiologist
- Pulmonologist
- Anti-inflammatory
- Benign
- PRN
- b.i.d.



Plain language sentences: examples

- **“You don't have COVID-19”**
instead of “Your COVID-19 test results were negative”
- **"Eat less salt"**
instead of "reduce sodium intake"
- **"Do not eat or drink before taking this medication"**
instead of "take this medication on an empty stomach"



Plain language principles

- Use familiar terms, not jargon, acronyms, or medical terminology
- Chunk information
 - Use ample headings and subheadings with less under each one
 - Use bullet points
- Organize logically: most important information first
- Write in a conversational voice vs. academic or research voice
 - Use the active voice

<https://plainlanguage.gov/guidelines/>



Print Communication: Readability vs. Plain Language

- **Readability:** how easy (or not) something is to read.
- **Plain language:** writing that people can understand. It ensures that readers can grasp the message the first time they read it.



Readability, plain language, health literacy

READABILITY

NOW THIS LOOKS LIKE
SOMETHIN' I'D READ!



PLAIN LANGUAGE

I'M UNDERSTANDIN' ALL
THIS INFO UP IN HERE!



HEALTH LITERACY

I'M GONNA GO MAKE
SOME INFORMED DECISIONS!



https://communicatehealth.com/wp-content/uploads/whhl/1_37SQn6CubxLAcYXRV-ip3w.png



SAM: subheadings and chunking

C. SUBHEADINGS OR “CHUNKING”

Explanation: Few people can remembering more than seven independent items. For adults with low literacy skills the limit may be three- to five-item lists. Longer lists need to be partitioned into smaller “chunks.”

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| <i>Superior</i> | (1) Lists are grouped under descriptive subheadings or “chunks.”
(2) No more than five items are presented without a subheading. |
| <i>Adequate</i> | No more than seven items are presented without a subheading. |
| <i>Not suitable</i> | More than seven items are presented without a subheading. |



Applying SAM



Pertussis: What Parents Need to Know

What is pertussis?

Pertussis, or whooping cough, is a persistent cough illness. Anyone of any age can get pertussis.

What are the symptoms of pertussis?

The first symptoms of pertussis are similar to a cold. After a week or two, the cough worsens and may occur in sudden, uncontrollable bursts. Sometimes coughing will lead to vomiting or a high-pitched whoop sound when breathing in. Persons with pertussis may seem well between coughing spells. These spells become less frequent over time, but may continue for several weeks or months until the lungs heal.

How is pertussis spread?

Pertussis bacteria are spread through droplets produced during coughing or sneezing. These droplets don't travel very far through the air and usually only infect persons nearby.

When and for how long can a person spread pertussis?

Persons with pertussis can spread it to others for the first 3 weeks of coughing or until they complete 5 days of antibiotic treatment, whichever occurs first.

How can pertussis be prevented?

Vaccination is the best way to prevent pertussis. Vaccination against pertussis is part of the regularly recommended childhood vaccines. A pertussis vaccine booster is also recommended for adolescents and adults. Ask your health care provider for more information.

Persons who have been vaccinated for pertussis may still get pertussis disease, but will generally have a milder illness.

Antibiotics are sometimes recommended to prevent pertussis in close contacts of someone with pertussis, such as household members.

Is there a lab test for pertussis?

Yes, but only if someone has symptoms. Most commonly, the nasal passage is swabbed and the swab is examined for the presence of pertussis bacteria. Sometimes a test using blood will be done to look for an immune response.

How long should someone with pertussis stay home from child care, school, work, etc.?

Persons with pertussis should stay home from child care, school, work, and other activities until they have finished 5 days of antibiotics, unless they have already been coughing for 3 or more weeks.

More tips

- Wash your hands often.
- Stay at home if you are ill.
- When coughing, cover your mouth with a tissue or cough into your sleeve.

Vaccine-Preventable Disease Section
PO Box 64975
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975
651-201-5414
www.health.state.mn.us/pertussis

6/25/2019

To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5414.

Descriptive subheadings

3 items under subheading



SAM: Criteria

C. SUBHEADINGS OR “CHUNKING”

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Applying SAM (cont'd)

September 14, 2017

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN BROWARD COUNTY ISSUES
PRECAUTIONS FOR FOOD SAFETY

**HURRICANE IRMA **
Public Health Advisory #7

(Fort Lauderdale) – Due to the number of households still without electrical power, the Florida Department of Health in Broward County (DOH-Broward) would like to remind everyone that it is important to take careful precautions to ensure food safety. The risk of food poisoning is heightened when refrigerators and ovens are inoperable, discard any food that has been at room temperature for two hours or more, and any food that has an unusual odor, color or texture. Just remember – ***When in doubt, throw it out!***

People can practice safe food handling and prevent food-borne illness by following these simple steps:

- Always keep a thermometer in your refrigerator. The temperature should read 41 degrees Fahrenheit (F) or below.
- A full cooler will maintain its cold temperatures longer than one that is partially filled, so it is important to pack plenty of extra ice or freezer packs to insure a constant cold temperature. If available, 25 pounds of dry ice will keep a ten-cubic-foot freezer below freezing for 3-4 days. Use care when handling dry ice and wear dry, heavy gloves to avoid injury.
- Thawed food can usually be eaten if it is still "refrigerator cold."
- Eggs and other foods need to be stored in 41F or slightly below. Do not eat foods that may have spoiled.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water that has been boiled or disinfected and cooled. Hands should be washed before preparing or eating food, after using the bathroom or changing a diaper, after handling uncooked food, after playing with a pet, after handling garbage, after tending to someone who is sick or injured, after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing, after participating in flood cleanup activities, and after handling articles contaminated with flood water or sewage.
- Fight "cross-contamination," which is the transfer of harmful bacteria to food from other foods. Never place any type of food on a plate, cutting board or utensil that previously held raw meat, poultry or seafood.
- When grilling foods, preheat the coals on your grill for 20-30 minutes or until the coals are lightly coated with ash. GRILLS SHOULD NEVER BE PLACED INDOORS.
- Use a meat thermometer to ensure that food reaches a safe internal temperature.
 - Hamburgers and ground poultry should be cooked to 160 F.
 - Poultry parts: 170 F.
 - Roasts, steaks and other large cuts of beef: 145 F. (rare) and 160 F (medium).
- Fish should be cooked until the meat is opaque and flakes easily.
- Use sanitized food and water bowls for your pets and be sure that they do not drink from flood-contaminated surfaces.
- Never taste food to determine its safety!



Use visuals to aid communication



- Concentrate on the main message
- Use clear headings, labels, and captions
- Use simple, realistic pictures
- Use colors to aid comprehension
- Beware of variations in interpretations of standard images

[Image from: fda.gov/Major-Food-Allergens](https://www.fda.gov/Major-Food-Allergens)



Verbal communication

- Listen carefully
- Use the receiver's words
- Use plain language and avoid jargon
- Slow down
- Limit and repeat content
- Demonstrate how it's done
- Use graphics



From *Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit*, 2nd Edition



Invite questions

- Instead of: Do you have any questions? (too easy to answer "no")
- Better to say: What questions do you have?



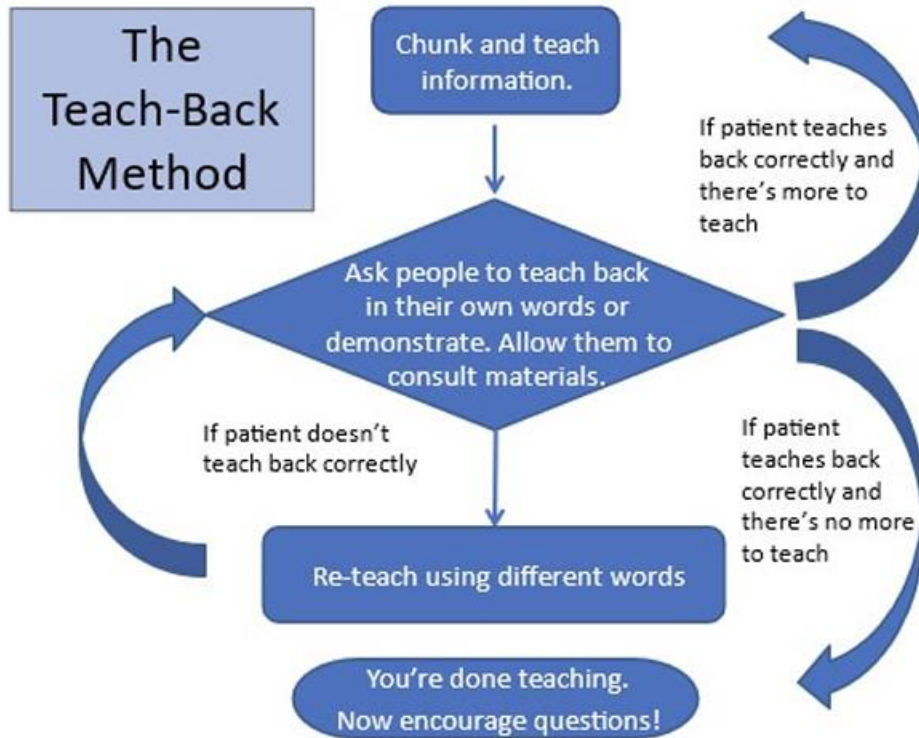
Confirm understanding

- Instead of: Do you understand? (too easy to answer "yes")
- Better to use the teach-back method

Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit, 2nd Edition



Teach Back Method



What is it?

- Chunk and teach information
- Ask patient to teach back in their own words
- Allow patients to consult material
- Repeat if a patient teaches back correctly and there is more to explain
- If patient doesn't teach back correctly, re-teach using different words

[AHRQ: Static Teach-back poster](#)



MedlinePlus: Tools to Promote Health Literacy

<https://medlineplus.gov/>

The screenshot shows the MedlinePlus website homepage. At the top, there is a blue header with the National Library of Medicine logo and the MedlinePlus logo, which includes a stylized 'M' and the text 'MedlinePlus® 25 YEARS of health information'. A search bar is located on the right side of the header. Below the header is a navigation menu with links for Health Topics, Drugs & Supplements, Genetics, Medical Tests, Medical Encyclopedia, and Español. The main content area features a 'Welcome to MedlinePlus' section with a brief description of the service and a 'Learn more about MedlinePlus' link. Below this is a 'FEATURED TOPIC' section for 'Vaccines', with a description and a 'Learn more' button. The page is organized into a grid of six green boxes, each representing a different category: Health Topics, Medical Encyclopedia, Genetics, Drugs & Supplements, Medical Tests, and Healthy Recipes. At the bottom, there are three more boxes: Easy-to-Read Health Information, Health Information in Multiple Languages, and MedlinePlus Connect for EHRs. The footer contains social media links, a subscribe to RSS link, and a URL for this page.

National Library of Medicine

MedlinePlus® 25 YEARS of health information

Search MedlinePlus GO

About MedlinePlus What's New Site Map Customer Support

Health Topics Drugs & Supplements Genetics Medical Tests Medical Encyclopedia Español

Welcome to MedlinePlus

MedlinePlus is an online health information resource for patients and their families and friends. It is a service of the National Library of Medicine (NLM), the world's largest medical library, which is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). [Learn more about MedlinePlus](#)

FEATURED TOPIC

Vaccines

Vaccines protect against life-threatening diseases. Follow a recommended immunization schedule to protect yourself and others at all stages of life.

[Learn more](#)

Health Topics
Find information on health, wellness, disorders and conditions

Medical Encyclopedia
Articles and images for diseases, symptoms, tests, treatments

Genetics
Explore genetic conditions, genes, and how genetic variations affect health

Drugs & Supplements
Prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines, herbs, and supplements

Medical Tests
Learn why your doctor orders medical tests and what the results may mean

Healthy Recipes
These recipes show you how to prepare tasty, quick meals as part of a healthy lifestyle

Easy-to-Read Health Information

Health Information in Multiple Languages

MedlinePlus Connect for EHRs

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NIH MedlinePlus Magazine

Clinical Trials

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National Library of Medicine 8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20894 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services National Institutes of Health FOIA USA.gov
URL for this page: <https://medlineplus.gov>



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Culturally aware communication

- Tailor messages to specific groups
- Be aware of cultural norms and customs that influence communication, decision making, health beliefs, and health behaviors
- Avoid idioms and jargon
- Use high quality translators and interpreters
- Avoid stereotypes



Use visuals and examples that reflect the audience

Baby Boomers AND FOOD SAFETY

About 1 in 6 Americans will get food poisoning each year. Older adults are at an increased risk of serious complications from foodborne illness. A few simple steps can help keep the golden years pleasant for you or older adults you help care for.

What May Make You Sick?

Here's a look at some of the most common food pathogens that affect older adults and where they're found:

- E. COLI O157:H7**: Undercooked ground beef, unpasteurized milk and juices, contaminated raw fruits and vegetables, and water. Person-to-person contact.
- CAMPYLOBACTER**: Unpasteurized (raw) milk. Raw or undercooked meat, poultry or shellfish. Untreated or contaminated water.
- SALMONELLA**: Raw or undercooked eggs, poultry or meat. Unpasteurized (raw) milk or juice. Cheese and seafood. Fresh fruits and vegetables.

Why Are You at Risk?

Older adults are at elevated risk for hospitalization and death from foodborne infections. Why?

- Medication side effects (like a weakened immune system)
- Changes in functioning of organs like liver and kidneys
- Underlying chronic conditions (such as diabetes or kidney disease)
- Age-related changes to GI tract

Product Dating

Dates printed on food labels indicate when items will no longer be at peak quality. Dates are not for safety. Here's what each one means:

- "SELL BY" DATE:** Buy the product before this date. It is safe to eat after this date.
- "BEST IF USED BY/USE BY":** This is the last date recommended for best flavor or quality.

Perishable food that has been held at unsafe temperatures can cause illness, regardless of the package date.

Foods to Avoid

- SOFT CHEESSES** made from unpasteurized milk (feta, brie, Camembert, blue-veined and queso fresco)
- RAW OR UNDERCOOKED MEAT, POULTRY, EGGS OR SEAFOOD**
- UNPASTEURIZED (RAW) MILK**
- RAW SPROUTS**
- UNWASHED FRESH VEGETABLES**
- HOT DOGS, DELI MEATS AND LUNCHEON MEATS** that have not been heated to steaming hot
- PATES** - unpasteurized/ refrigerated pates

Safety Tips

The pathogens that cause foodborne illness can't be smelled or tasted. Proper food handling of the food you bring home is your best defense against food poisoning. With all foods, follow these tips:

- CLEAN:** Clean surfaces, utensils and hands with soap and warm water.
- SEPARATE:** Separate raw meat, poultry and seafood from ready-to-eat foods in your grocery-shopping cart, refrigerator, and during meal prep.
- COOK:** Cooked food is safe only after it's been heated to a high enough temperature to kill harmful bacteria. Use a food thermometer.
- CHILL:** Chill raw and prepared foods promptly if not consuming after cooking.

USDA | Ad Council | www.foodsafety.gov | **FoodSafety.gov** | **ADDITIONAL SOURCE** | <http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/>

PLEASE PROTECT ONE ANOTHER FROM COVID-19

Wear a face covering and keep 6 feet apart from others in public spaces.

Wash hands before and after wearing a mask

- Fit coverings snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- Use the ties or loops to put your mask on and off
- Face coverings should have multiple layers
- Avoid touching the front of the face covering, especially when you take it off
- Wash and dry your cloth mask daily
- Children 5 and over must wear a face covering

For more information: kingcounty.gov/masks

Public Health
Seattle & King County

TEENS & TEETH

NIX SUGARY SNACKS

Sugar sticks to teeth, causing bacteria buildup that can lead to cavities.¹

Pro Tip: Teens get **16.9%** of calories from fast food!² Choose healthy snacks like fruits, veggies and whole grains.

CUT THE CANDY

AVOID MOUTH PIERCINGS

They increase the risk of infections, chips or cracks in teeth and soft tissue damage. They can also be a choking hazard.³

ALSO A RISK FROM THIS

TEETH AS TOOLS

Don't crunch ice, open bottles or tear bags with your teeth. These actions can lead to cracks and chips in teeth.⁴

PHOTO BY: © 2004, ISTOCK.COM/PHOTO BANK, ENKOR

1. <http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/nutrition/child-snacking-tips>
 2. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/22/health/how-much-junk-food-do-teenagers-eat.html>
 3. <http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/az-topics/oral-piercings>
 4. <http://orahhealth.deltadental.com/22.Dental08>

DELTA DENTAL

EthnoMed

*Ethno*MED

CLINICAL TOPICS ▾ CULTURES ▾ IMMIGRATION ▾ RESOURCES ▾ ABOUT ▾ CONTRIBUTE NEWS CALENDAR 🔍




<https://ethnomed.org/>



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Indian Health Service (HIS)



Indian Health Service
The Federal Health Program for American Indians and Alaska Natives

[A to Z Index](#) [Employee Resources](#) [Feedback](#)

The Indian Health Service is working closely with our tribal partners to coordinate a comprehensive public health response to both [COVID-19](#) and [mpox](#).

[About IHS](#) [Locations](#) [for Patients](#) [for Providers](#) [Community Health](#) [Careers@IHS](#) [Newsroom](#)

[for Providers](#) / Patient Education

for Providers

- Best and Promising Practices
- Clinical Resources
- Committees
- Continuing Education
- Health and Wellness Programs
- Health Information Technology
- LISTSERV Email Groups
- National Combined Councils
- Patient Education**
- Primary Care Provider Newsletter
- Veteran Resources

Patient Education

Materials


Educational resources, locally developed and culturally relevant patient education handouts on a wide variety of diseases and topics are available.

- [Patient Education Materials](#)
- [Health Literacy](#)
- [HIV/AIDS Training](#)
- [Influenza](#)

Protocols and Codes

The use of the Patient Education Protocols and Codes (PEPCs) standardizes the documentation of patient/health education encounters from one health professional to another.

Learn more about [Patient Education Protocols and Codes \(PEPC\) Website](#).



IHS Headquarters, Indian Health Service, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20857 - [Find a Mail Stop](#)

<https://www.ihs.gov/>



Summary

- **Health Literacy** is a shared responsibility
- **Universal precautions for health literacy** ensure that we communicate in ways that everyone can understand
- **Clear health communication** best practices include using plain language, limiting to "need to know" information, confirming understanding, and being aware of cultural differences
- Free **online resources** you can use to promote health literacy include SAM, MedlinePlus, EthnoMed, IHS, and the AHRQ Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit



What is CHIS?



CHIS stands for Consumer Health Information Specialization, a program the Medical Library Association (MLA) provides.



CHIS offers training in providing health information services to consumers and recognition for the accomplishment of acquiring new health information skills.





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Expand your skills, Support your community, Obtain your CHIS today!

The Consumer Health Information Specialization (CHIS) is a program to provide training to become a confident expert provider of health information to your community. The Medical Library Association (MLA) recognizes your accomplishment with a certificate and a digital badge.



Free classes



Flexible learning
options



NNLM sponsorship
of application fee



Digital badge



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Provide **quality health information to your community** by gaining skills and knowledge in areas such as:

- Understanding your community
- Health literacy
- Mental health resources
- Evaluating health information
- Health equity



Obtain your CE and use the NNLM sponsorship



Step 1: Earn 12 CE through FREE classes!



Step 2: Apply for NNLM CHIS Sponsorship



Step 3: Receive NNLM sponsored CHIS



Learn more by visiting: nnlm.gov/JdHKf
or scanning the QR code



Claim your CE credit – Step 1



Course evaluation link:



Claim your CE credit – Step 2



1. Go to: **medlib-ed.org**
2. Login. If you are a new user, register to create an account. **Important: Do not create multiple accounts. If you have forgotten your password, select "Forgot Password?" to reset.**
3. Click "My Learning" on the blue bar.
4. Enter [the enrollment code] to add the course to your My Learning.
5. Select "Start Course" button to complete the attestation, optional questionnaire and claim credit and/or download a certificate.
6. Course will automatically be added to your Transcript.



Continue Learning

- Visit nnlm.gov/training to find additional classes
- For questions contact nto@utah.edu

Step 1

Complete the Consumer Health Information Specialization On-Demand course.

This class covers all five competencies and offers 8 CE credits.

Step 2

Choose from a variety of webinars and on-demand classes to complete an additional 4 credits.

On-Demand & Scheduled Offerings

- Finding and Using Health Statistics
- Environmental Health and Justice: a brief primer
- Drug and Chemical Information On-Demand
- Beyond the Binary: Understanding LGBTQIA+ Health
- ClinicalTrials.gov for Librarians

Find additional offerings at www.nnlm.gov/training.

Step 3

How to Apply for CHIS

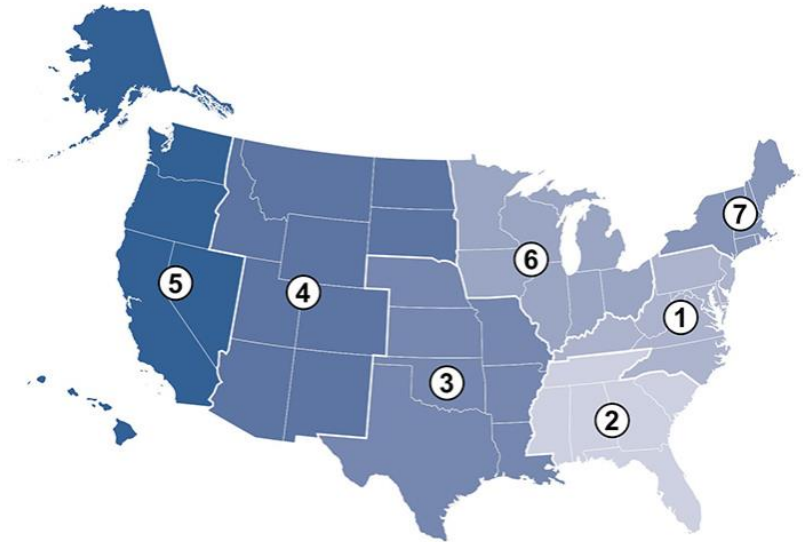
1. Create an account on MEDLIB-ED.org
2. Upon completion of each class, claim credit on [MEDLIB-ED](http://MEDLIB-ED.org)
3. After you have earned 12 CHIS credits, apply for NNLM CHIS sponsorship to cover the MLA application fee.
4. Once awarded, display the digital badge on your profiles or email signatures.



NNLM Organizational Membership

The benefits of organizational NNLM membership

- A certificate of recognition
- Eligibility for project funding
- Document delivery services
- Emergency preparedness planning response
- Partnerships with other NNLM members.



Become an organizational member today at nnlm.gov/membership/join.



Questions, Evaluation and CE



Stacey R. Hendren

Stacey.Hendren@anokacountymn.gov

Anoka County Library Manger

Consumer Health Information Specialization Trainer

Katherine V. Chew, MLS

Chewx002@umn.edu

Associate Librarian, Research/Outreach Services & liaison
librarian

Health Sciences Library, University of Minnesota.

***Retiring in November 2024**



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