

Making Informed Health Choices: *A Guide for the Disability Community*



Health literacy empowers you to make informed decisions about your body and well-being, giving you greater independence and control over your healthcare choices.

What is Health Literacy?

- Health literacy means understanding and using health information to make good choices about your health and well-being.
- It helps you talk to healthcare providers, understand health services, and take care of your body.
 - Healthcare services include:
 - Regular Checkups – Visits to a doctor for routine care and illness treatment.
 - Specialist Care – Help from doctors who focus on specific health issues (like heart or brain doctors).
 - Emergency Care – Treatment for serious injuries or sudden health problems.
 - Mental Health Support – Counseling, therapy, and treatment for mental health conditions.
 - Physical Therapy – Help recovering from injuries or disabilities.
 - Long-Term Care – Support for older adults or people with long-term health needs.
 - Prevention – Vaccines, screenings, and health programs to stay well.
 - Online Doctor Visits – Virtual medical care through phone or video.



Why is Health Literacy Important?

- Helps you make informed decisions to improve your health and get the care you need.
- Makes visits to doctors, therapists, and other healthcare providers easier and less stressful.
- Empowers you to make healthier choices, find accessible ways to stay active, manage stress, and create a safe environment at home and in your community.

How to Improve Health Literacy

- Ask Questions – If something isn't clear, ask for more information. Some examples are:
 - Can you explain what this means in a way that's easy to understand?
 - What are my choices for treatment, and which one do you think is best?
 - How will this medicine or treatment help me, and are there any side effects?
- Request Plain Language – Ask healthcare providers to use clear and simple words when discussing your health.
- Take Notes or Make an Audio Recording – Write down or record important health information so you can review it later.
 - Some doctor's offices may not let you record, but it's your right to ask. If you don't like their answer, you can find a new provider.
- If you need support, you can bring a trusted friend, family member, or advocate to help you understand information. Healthcare confidentiality keeps your personal health details private, building trust with your doctor so you can share openly and get the best care. Be sure to tell your provider to communicate with you directly, not just your advocate.
 - Able SC is here to help! Contact us if you need support or information on personal healthcare advocacy.
- Use Visual Aids – Drawing, diagrams, videos, apps, or other tools can make health information easier to understand. Here are two resources you can use to create communication that works best for you.
 - [Easy-to-Read Health Information](#)
 - [Easy read and communication support for healthcare and medical professionals](#)

Where to Find Safe and Reliable Health Information

- Your personal Healthcare Providers – Ask questions and get facts.
- U.S. Government Websites
 - [HealthCare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov) – Provides information about health insurance options and enrollment.
 - [CDC - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov) – Offers updates on public health, disease prevention, and health recommendations.
 - [NIH - National Institutes of Health](https://www.nih.gov) – A leading source for health research, medical conditions, and wellness tips.
 - [HHS - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](https://www.hhs.gov) – Covers a wide range of health-related topics, from privacy laws to healthcare programs.
- Trusted Health Organizations
 - [CDC, Disability and Health](https://www.cdc.gov)
 - [The Mayo Clinic](https://www.mayoclinic.org)
 - [World Institute on Disability](https://www.widgit.com)
- Your local Center for Independent Living – find yours at [Administration for Community Living, Centers for Independent Living](https://www.administrationforcommunityliving.org)

Why Medical Information on Social Media May Not Be Trustworthy

Social Media can include sites like Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, Threads, Bluesky and more

- Anyone can post health advice online, even if it's wrong.
- Some information is based on opinions, not facts.
- Health trends and “quick fixes” may not be safe.
- It's best to check with your healthcare provider before following online advice.

Your health is important, and it's okay to take your time, ask for support, and do thorough research to make informed decisions that are best for you!

Sources:

[National Library of Medicine](#)

[U.S. Department of Health & Human Services \(HHS\)](#)

[U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' privacy rules.](#)

[Widgit Health](#)