

# Health Literacy

Health literacy represents the cognitive and social skills which determine the motivation and ability of individuals to gain access and use information in ways which promote and maintain good health.

– World Health Organization, 1998

The Health Literacy Action Team wants to hear from you. What are you currently doing to improve health literacy in the United States? Do you have health literacy curricula, health literacy programs or integrated health literacy resources to share? Follow this link or scan this QR Code to share information with us:

[http://survey.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_bHm7yu5SA5OVLBb](http://survey.az1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_bHm7yu5SA5OVLBb)



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## COOPERATIVE EXTENSION'S NATIONAL FOCUS ON HEALTH LITERACY

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## Health Literacy Impacts on Individual and Public Health



**COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION**  
*Extending Knowledge, Changing Lives*  
EXTENSION COMMITTEE ON ORGANIZATION & POLICY



## At-risk populations: Who needs to be reached?

### Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)

- Age
- Gender
- Income
- Literacy skills
- Education level
- Community
- Racial or ethnic group
- Health and health care
- Environment
- **others**

At risk audiences: Older adults, racial and ethnic minorities, low income levels, less than a high school degree, General Education Development (GED), English as a second language (ESL), incarcerated

Healthy People 2020 highlights the importance of addressing the social determinants of health in their goal to “Create social and physical environ-

## Health Literacy in America

Health Literacy goes beyond the individual: It also depends upon the skills, preferences, and expectations of health information and care providers: doctors, nurses, administrators, home health workers, the media, and much more.

### Links between limited health literacy and health outcomes

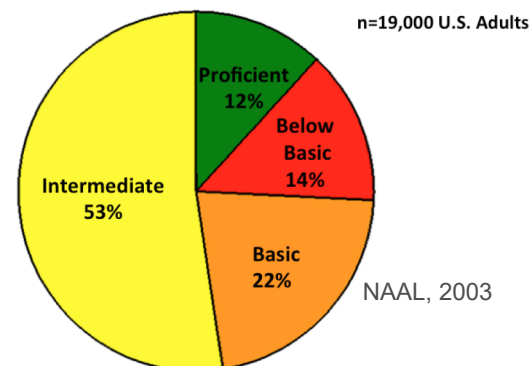
Three different types of health actions that mediate the impact of health literacy on health:

1. Access to and utilization of health care
2. Patient-provider interaction
3. Self-care

Other factors such as confusing health messages in the media and availability of health education also affect health literacy outcomes.

*“Americans often lack the capacity to obtain, process and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions”*

**Only 12% (1 out of 10) of U.S. adults are proficient in Health Literacy**



Cooperative Extension ultimately wants to reach the public through educational efforts that increase the individual’s capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions. Extension is working toward this goal through these six strategic program priorities:

- Integrated nutrition, health, environment, and agriculture systems
- Health literacy
- Chronic disease prevention and management
- Positive youth development for health
- Health insurance Literacy
- Health policy issues education

## Increase Health Literacy

In order to increase health literacy individuals need knowledge in: accessing health care services, reading and understanding information given to them, analyzing relative risks and benefits, calculating prescription dosages, interpreting and understanding medication labels, communicating with health care providers, evaluating information for credibility and quality, and interpreting test results.

### This is how we can help.

As Extension Educators we can use our resources to help increase the level of health literacy in the United States.