

HEALTH LITERACY

The ability to understand basic health information and services (including insurance and medical billing) in order to make informed decisions concerning health choices; to be able to work in partnership with medical practitioners and caregivers to provide and receive the best health care possible.



Only 12% of U.S. adults have the health literacy skills needed to manage the demands of our complex health system, and even these individuals' ability to absorb and use health information can be compromised by stress or illness.

80% of Internet users look for health information online.

Proprietary ranking methods of popular search engines and the use of sponsored results can lead to misleading information on health topics such as nutrition and exercise.



✓ Individuals with limited health literacy experience a variety of negative outcomes. They have more restricted knowledge of their health problems, make more errors taking medicine, use more inpatient and emergency department care, receive fewer preventative services, and have worse health status and higher health care costs.

- ✓ In addition to the effects of low health literacy on the individual patient, there are also economic consequences.
- ✓ Your average mid-sized community hospital that sees 5,000 patients per year spends an additional \$1.8 million dollars covering the costs associated with health literacy.

- ✓ Patients with inadequate health literacy are diagnosed with cancer at a later stage. Populations most likely to suffer from low health literacy include those aged 65 and over, minorities, immigrant populations, and Medicare/Medicaid recipients.
- ✓

Research shows that individuals with low health literacy were significantly more likely than individuals with adequate health literacy to delay or forego needed care or to report difficulty finding a provider.



Basic health literacy is fundamental to the success of interaction between health care professionals and patients - every prescription, every treatment and every recovery.

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About PA Forward

Pennsylvania's libraries serve as models of cost-effective service. Libraries stretch the public's resources through book sharing, computers, online resources, facilities and expertise.

PA Forward | Pennsylvania Libraries, an initiative of the Pennsylvania Library Association, aims to make sure libraries have what they need to help people reach their greatest potential and meet the demands of a constantly changing world. The program establishes new public-private partnerships and builds on the belief that libraries are uniquely positioned to help Pennsylvanians improve their command of five types of literacy essential to greater success in all vital roles of life, from citizens, students, and parents to employers, employees, and consumers.

PA Forward promotes and benefits all libraries by demonstrating that literacy is power and how libraries provide the fuel to power Pennsylvania.

For more information about the Pennsylvania Library Association and PA Forward, visit www.palibraries.org or call 717-766-7663. For the latest information, like the Association's Facebook pages as Facebook/PALibraries and Facebook/PA Forward. You can also follow on Twitter at @PALibraryAssoc and @PAForward5.

Library Contact Information

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