

# Health literacy and numeracy in Ireland

## Health literacy and numeracy has two elements:



**Health services** communicate clearly and take account of possible health literacy and numeracy needs.



**People** understand health information correctly and can make an informed decision.

## Why is this important?

The EU Health Literacy Survey (2012) showed that 4 in 10 Irish adults had limited health literacy.



Research shows that people with **high levels** of health literacy **live longer lives.**

## Limited health literacy and numeracy could mean:



I don't fully understand my condition and treatment.



I might make a mistake when taking medicines.



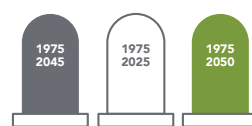
I am more at risk of going to hospital.



I might visit the emergency department more frequently.



I am less likely to go for screening.



I could die younger.

## Health literacy and numeracy is everybody's business.



### Having strong health literacy and numeracy means...

- I am more **confident** to ask questions.
- I understand how to **manage** chronic health conditions.
- I make **sound health decisions**.
- I can **follow** medicine instructions.
- I give **informed consent** to treatment.
- I **find my way** around health services.



### Delivering a literacy friendly health service means...

- You provide a quality service where the **person fully understands** their condition and what they need to do.
- You are more **effective** and **efficient**.
- You have **fewer misunderstandings** and complaints.
- You **save time** and **money**.

## Tips for the public



**I am prepared for meeting with health service providers.** I think about any concerns beforehand and write my questions down.



**I ask questions.** When I don't understand a medical term or concept, I ask for it to be explained to me more simply.



**I check that I understand what has been said to me.** I repeat back to the healthcare provider what I think they said and what I must do.



**I make sure I know the answers to these 3 questions before I leave the meeting:**

1. What is my main problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why is it important for me to do this?

(Taken from Ask Me 3 Campaign: [www.npsf.org/askme3](http://www.npsf.org/askme3))

## Tips for the service



**Communicate using plain English and follow design standards.**

See [www.simplyput.ie](http://www.simplyput.ie) for advice.



**Give clear, easy to follow verbal information.** Explain any medical terminology.



**Check that people understand what you have said.**

Ask people to repeat back to you:

1. What is their main problem?
2. What do they need to do?
3. Why it is important they need to do this?

(Taken from Ask Me 3 Campaign: [www.npsf.org/askme3](http://www.npsf.org/askme3))



**The layout and signage is clear and easy to follow.**

There is a map and floor plan at the main door. There are clear direction signs.



**All staff are aware of literacy and numeracy issues and how to respond appropriately and sensitively.** For example, staff offer help with reading information and or filling in a form.