

Health Literacy, Preventive Health Care, and Healthy Lifestyles

Health Literacy Skills

- Increase a person's ability to:
 - Understand health concepts
 - Share information with doctors
 - Make healthy choices
 - Engage in self-care and disease management¹
- Lower health literacy skills decrease a person's ability to:
 - Understand health risks
 - Evaluate different treatment options
 - Follow health care recommendations¹

Health Literacy and Use of Preventive Care

- Better health prevention requires patients to have adequate health literacy skills
- People need to understand prevention information in order to follow it
- People with limited health literacy
 - Get fewer mammograms/Pap smears¹
 - Receive flu and pneumonia vaccines less often¹
 - Are less likely to take their children to well-child health visits²
 - Get dental check ups for themselves and their children less²
- More effective health prevention
 - Focused more on different literacy levels
 - Take steps to address patient's native language¹

Health Literacy and Healthy Lifestyles

- Healthy lifestyle choices
 - Eating a healthy diet
 - Healthy weight maintenance
 - Regular exercise
 - Quitting smoking
 - Minimizing stress³

- Healthy Eating
 - *Obese patients with low literacy*
 - Less likely to understand the effects of obesity
 - Often don't understand need to lose weight⁴
- According to former U.S. Surgeon General, Richard H. Carmona
 - Reducing obesity improves health literacy⁵
- People with limited health literacy
 - Unable to interpret nutritional information
 - Don't understand the concept of caloric intake/expenditure⁵

Health Literacy and Tobacco Use

- Research
 - Low literacy is a key predictor of tobacco use in adolescents (male *and* female)⁶
 - Low literacy was strongly associated with adults who smoke⁷
 - Low literacy patients who smoke are less likely to understand their risk of heart attack/stroke⁸
- Smoking education materials for:
 - **Low-income African American/Hispanic pregnancies**
 - Smoking cessation materials at a *third-grade level* lead to a *higher rate of tobacco abstinence* during & immediately following pregnancy⁹

References

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