

# What is Health Literacy?

The degree to which an individual has the capacity to obtain, communicate, process, and understand basic health information and services to make appropriate health decisions

## What is a Personal Health Literacy?

- is the degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others

## What is an Organizational Health Literacy?

- is the degree to which organizations equitably enable individuals to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others

## What does the definition of Health Literacy imply?

- Emphasize people's ability to *use* health information rather than just understand it
- Focus on the ability to make "well-informed" decisions rather than "appropriate" ones
- Incorporate a public health perspective
- Acknowledge that organizations have a responsibility to address health literacy

## Why understanding Healthy Literacy is important?

- People need information they can understand and use to make the best decisions for their health
- Health Literacy Affects Everyone. It is important for everyone because, at some point in our lives, we all need to be able to find, understand, and use health information and services. Taking care of our health is part of everyday life, not just when we visit a doctor, clinic, or hospital. Health literacy can help us prevent health problems and protect our health, as well as better manage those problems and unexpected situations that happen.

## When people may face health literacy issues despite their ability to read well and use numbers?

- They are not familiar with medical terms or how their bodies work.
- They have to interpret statistics and evaluate risks and benefits that affect their health and safety.
- They are diagnosed with a serious illness and are scared and confused.
- They have health conditions that require complicated self-care.
- They are researching an issue affecting the community's health and relying on unfamiliar technical information.

## Why Consider Language, Culture, Customs and Beliefs?

- Religion, culture, beliefs, and ethnic customs can influence how patients understand health concepts, how they take care of their health, and how they make decisions related to their health
- Respectfully ask participants: "Is there anything I should know about your culture, beliefs, or religious practices that would help me take better care of you?"; "Do you have any dietary restrictions that we should consider as we develop together your nutrition care plan for better health?"
- Avoid Stereotyping: Understand that each person is an individual and may or may not adhere to certain cultural beliefs or practices common in his or her culture.