

Practice

Speaking and Writing in Plain Language

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**To screen or not to screen,
that is the question.**

Measuring Health Literacy

The Newest Vital Signs

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size	1/2 cup
Servings per container	4
Amount per serving	
Calories 250	Fat Cal 120
	%DV
Total Fat 13g	20%
Sat Fat 9g	40%
Cholesterol 28mg	12%
Sodium 55mg	2%
Total Carbohydrate 30g	12%
Dietary Fiber 2g	
Sugars 23g	
Protein 4g	8%
* Percent Daily Values (DV) are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	
Ingredients: Cream, Skim Milk, Liquid Sugar, Water, Egg Yolks, Brown Sugar, Milkfat, Peanut Oil, Sugar, Butter, Salt, Carrageenan, Vanilla Extract.	

- Test of Functional Health Literacy in Adults (TOFHLA)
- Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine (REALM)
- The Newest Vital Signs

Source: Haun JN, Valerio MA, McCormack LA, Sorensen K, Paasche-Orlow M. Health Literacy Measurement: An Inventory and Descriptive Summary of 51 Instruments. *J Health Comm.* 2014;19(sup2): 301-333.

Screening Questions for Limited Health Literacy (Chew 2008)

- How often do you have someone help you read hospital materials?
- How confident are you filling out medical forms by yourself?
- How often do you have problems learning about your medicine condition because of difficulty understanding written information?

Source: Chew et al. Validation of Screening Questions for Limited Health Literacy in a Large VA Outpatient Population. *J Gen Intern Med.* 2008; 23(5): 561-566.

Single Item Literacy Screener (SILS)

“How often do you need to have someone help you read written material from your doctor or pharmacy?”

Source: Morris NS, MacLean CD, Chew LD, Lettenberg B. The Single Item Literacy Screener: Evaluation of a brief instrument to identify limited reading ability. BMC Family Medicine. 2006;7(21)2296-721.

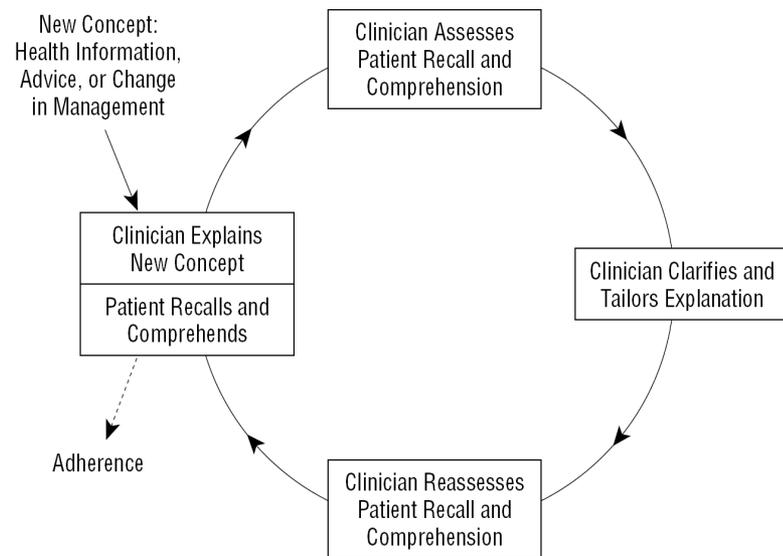
To screen or not to screen, that is the question?

- **Pros:** Identifying individual as risk, documenting in the records, offering tailored intervention
- **Cons:** Promotes anxiety and shame, not a universal precautions approach, creates additional barrier

PRACTICE

Teach back technique

What is Teach Back?



- An evidence-based intervention that improves health outcomes
- A way to make sure you explain information clearly
- A way to check understanding and if needed re-teach or identify additional support

Source: Schillinger D, et al. Closing the Loop Physician Communication With Diabetic Patients Who Have Low Health Literacy. Arch Intern Med/Vol 163, Jan 13, 2003

Teach Back Example



Source: American Medical Association Foundation and American Medical Association. *Health Literacy and Patient Safety: Help Patients Understand*. Chicago, IL: American Medical Association; 2007.

Teach Back Example

- What will you tell your husband about the changes we made to your blood pressure medicine today?
- We've gone over a lot of information about how to get more exercise in your day. How will you make it work at home?

Use Open Ended Questions

- **Closed:** Do you have a follow up appointment? Do you have any questions?
- **Open:** When is your follow up appointment? What questions do you have?



Working with Interpreters

- Clarify interpreter's role
- Note mode of interpretation
- Work with a trained interpreter
- Practice Triadic Interview
- Use first-person
- Maintain transparency



Source: HRSA (2007). *Unified Health Communication 101: Addressing Health Literacy, Cultural Competency, and Limited English Proficiency.*

<http://www.hrsa.gov/healthliteracy/training.htm>

Everything gets interpreted

Teach Back Tool Kit



Home

Using the Teach-back Toolkit

Interactive Learning Module

Coaching to Always Use Teach-back

To Learn More

Acknowledgements

Welcome to the *Always Use Teach-back!* training toolkit



<http://www.teachbacktraining.org/>

Elements of Competency

1. Caring tone of voice
2. Comfortable body language / eye contact
3. Plain language, avoid jargon
4. Patient explains back using their own words
5. Non-shaming questions / environment
6. Ask open-ended questions
7. Responsibility is on provider
8. Explain again and re-check
9. Reader-friendly materials to support learning
10. Document use and response

Activity

Teach back practice

Read case example. Work in pairs.
Practice speaking in plain language.
Practice teach back. Receive feedback.
Switch roles.

PRACTICE

Writing in plain language

Passive Voice

- For good protection, sun screen must be applied every few hours.
- Fish high in mercury should not be eaten by pregnant or nursing women.
- Chronic disease can be managed by patients in partnership with their doctors.

Abstract and Vague

- It's important to discuss general health and lifestyle information with your doctor.
- Adults need adequate sleep to function effectively in their jobs.
- Patient vital signs will be taken at every visit.
- Good oral health is important to teeth and gums.

Too Many Words

- The majority of patients don't understand preparatory instructions for most but not all laboratory procedures.
- The important thing is that the health care team will carefully monitor your progress at each and every visit.

Activity

Plain language practice

Review case example. Identify three most important points. Use active voice. Be specific. Use common words. Rewrite as simply as possible.

Key Points

- Screening tools are available but no consensus on utility
- Teaching back is an evidence-based intervention
- Open ended questions are key to effective teach back
- Plain language writing takes practice