NHS Education for Scotland

The Knowledge Network

Health Literacy:
Tools and Techniques for Good Communication

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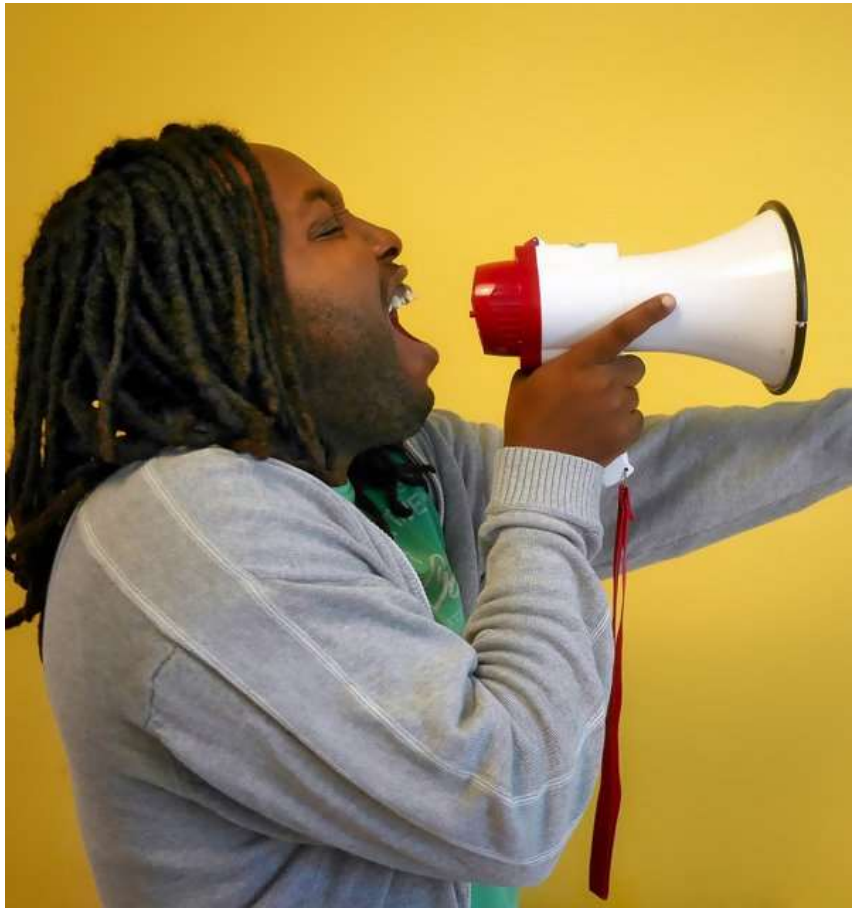
2nd March 2022 – Support Worker Virtual Learning Week

Before the session begins



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- Be prepared to do **polls and quizzes** in another browser window or on a separate device (e.g. smartphone)
- Go to Slido.com and use event code: #healthlit
- Use the Teams chat or the Slido Q&A to ask questions

Learning outcomes

This session will cover:

- What health literacy is and why it is important
- Tools and techniques you can use to support people with their health literacy
- Where to go for trusted health information
- Information literacy – simple questions to ask
- Further resources

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What is health literacy

"People having enough knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence to use health information, to be active partners in their care, and to navigate health and social care systems"

(Scottish Government, Making it Easy, Health Literacy Action Plan for Scotland 2014)

The Health Literacy Place

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Impact of poor health literacy

- Poorer health outcomes
- Harder to access the right services
- Difficulty in self managing long term conditions
- Less able to communicate with health staff

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Health literacy relates to a range of communications including, written, spoken and visual. All health and social care staff in Scotland have a responsibility to support health literacy.

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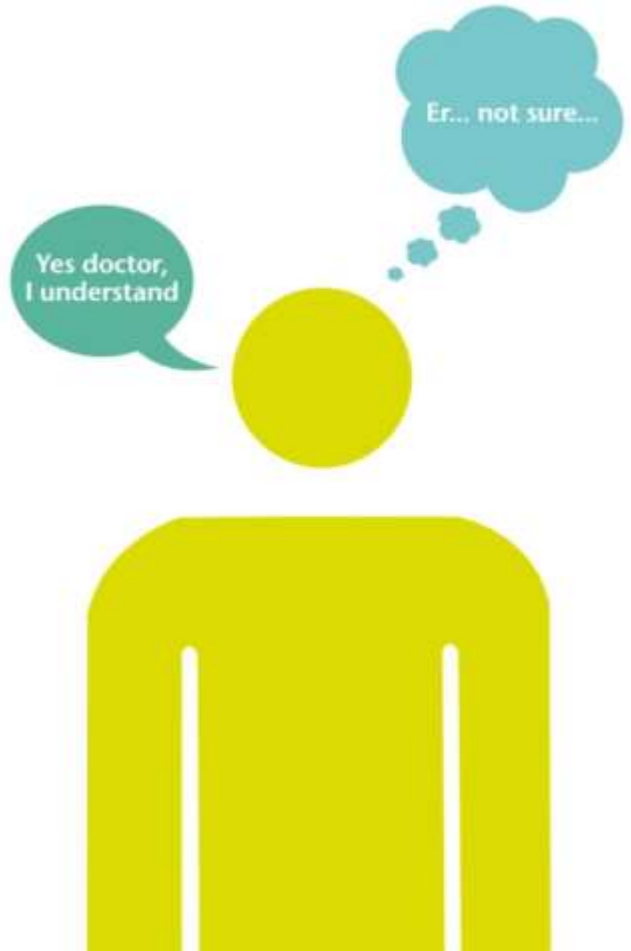
"Half of what a person is told is forgotton[1]

and half of what they remember

is misunderstood[2]"



1. Kessels RP. Patients' memory for medical information. J R Soc Med. May 2003;96(5):219-22.

2. Anderson JL, Dodman S, Kopelman M, Fleming A. Patient information recall in a rheumatology clinic. Rheumatology. 1979;18(1):18-22.

This handy infographic and other information can be found on the Patient Information Forum website: pifonline.org.uk

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Think of one word which represents how you, or the people you support, feel when being presented with health information.

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The impact of poor health literacy is:

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Universal precautions approach

- Everyone can be at risk
- Never assume
  - Education
  - Language
  - Culture
  - Age

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Use health literacy tools

- Teach back
- Chunk and Check
- Use simple language
- Use pictures
- Routinely offer help with paperwork

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Teach Back

You cannot tell if a person has understood you just by looking at them, or by asking them.

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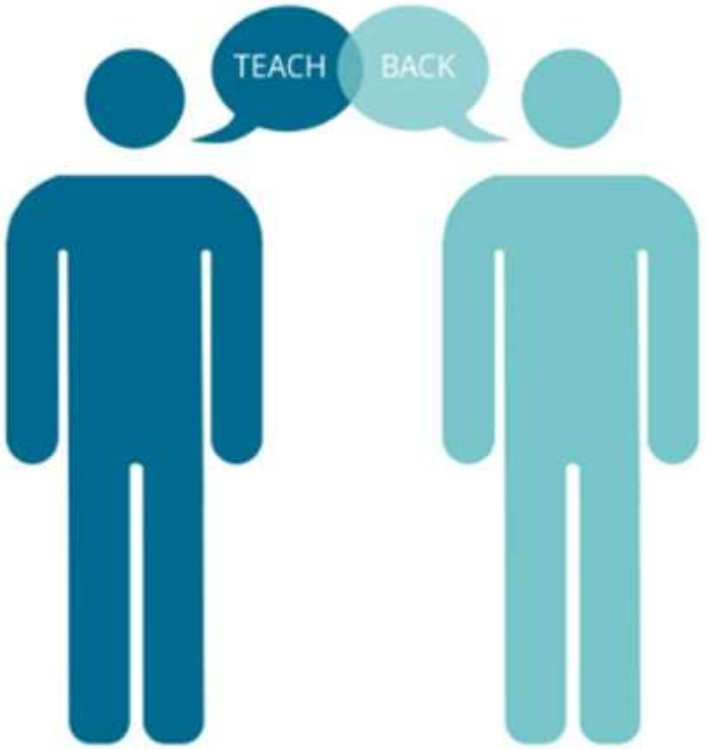
Teach Back

Get people to 'teach back' what has been discussed and what instruction has been given.

- Ask person to use their own words
- Confirm your explanation
- Not a test



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Teach Back

- I would like to check that I have explained things properly, would you mind telling me what it is we have discussed and what I've asked you to do?
- Can you tell me how you are going to explain things to your family when you get home tonight?

- I want to make sure you have understood, can you tell me what I've asked you to do?
- Have you understood everything we have discussed?

Teach–back technique

Improving communication | Improving patient safety
Improving self management | Improving health literacy

Clear communication is essential for effective healthcare relationships and patient safety. Yet patients remember and understand less than half of the information they are given.

Poor understanding can lead to serious health problems.

Simply asking 'is that clear?' or 'have you understood everything?' doesn't work.

Use teach-back, it's an easy and effective way to check patient's understanding.

NHS SCOTLAND

Teach-back is a really simple way to check patient's understanding.

It involves asking patients to explain or demonstrate, **in their own words**, what you've discussed with them – for example:

'To be sure I've explained this consent form clearly, can you tell me what you are agreeing to?'

Or

'Please show me how you will use the asthma inhaler, so I can be sure I have given you clear instructions.'

Or

'We discussed a lot today. Can you tell me what you found most important?'

- If patients don't restate the information correctly, then try explaining again using different words, drawing a diagram or simplifying instructions, then use teach back again.
- If, after two or three attempts, the patient still does not "get it," then ask a colleague for help or look for another explanation such as the need for an interpreter.

Further copies of this postcard are available from:
knowledge@nes.scot.nhs.uk

May 2011

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Chunk and Check

Break the information down into small pieces or chunks and check for understanding after each piece

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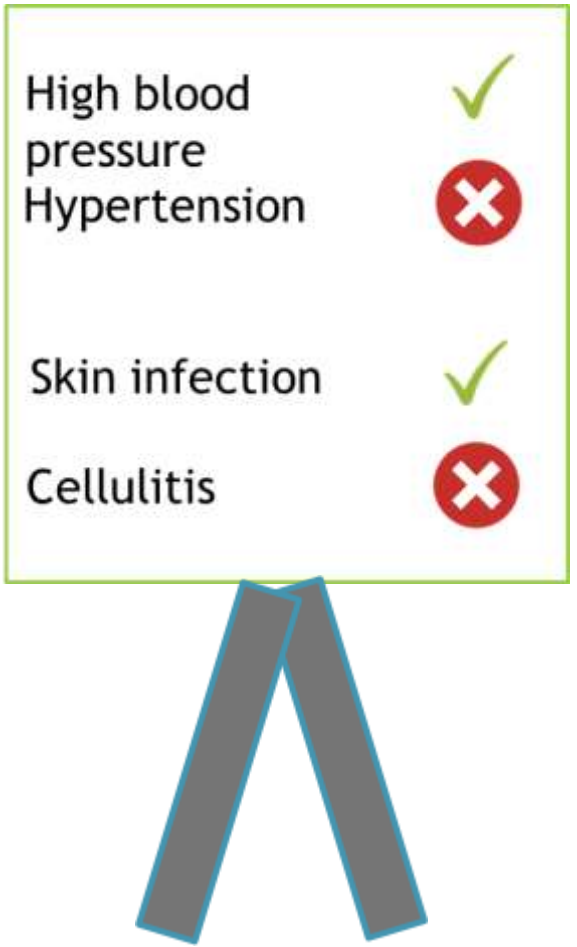
Use Simple Language

- Within health, a lot of jargon, health terminology and acronyms are used.
- This can be challenging for people to understand.
- We should use plain and simple language to explain things.



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Use Pictures

Pictures can help improve health understanding when communicating new information

Use images to support discussion and encourage questions

Using pictures in addition to written or spoken information can also help people recall information

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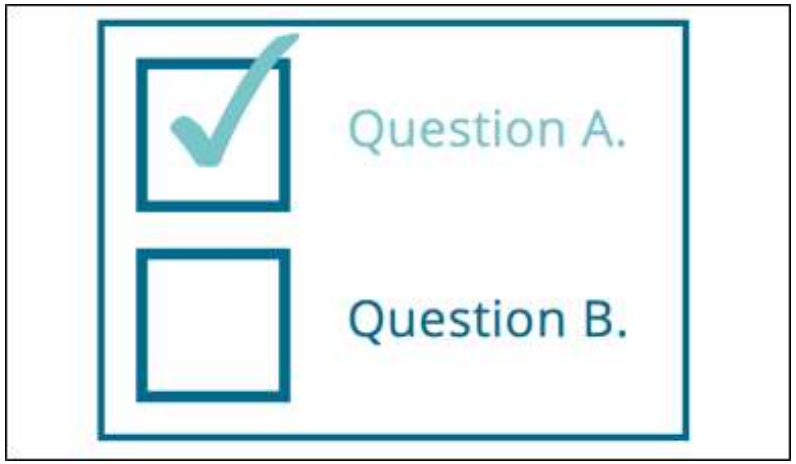
Routinely offer help with paperwork

It is not possible to tell by looking at someone whether they might have problems with paperwork or understanding health information.



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Please fill in the survey

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If you break information down into bitesize pieces to help people understand this is called:

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Find information to give to a patient, client or another person

- NHS Inform
- Public libraries
- Third Sector Websites

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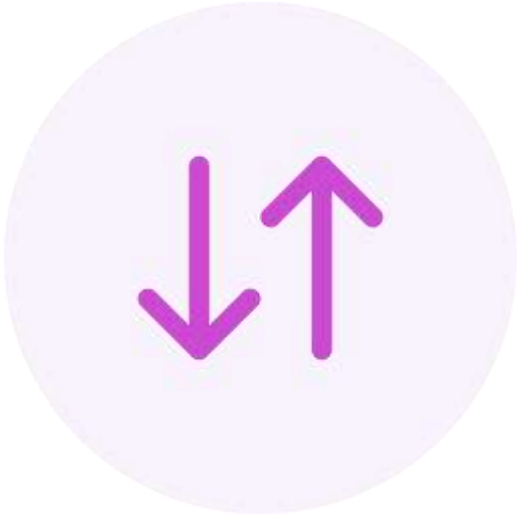

You want to share information with a patient about high blood pressure, rank these options by suitability:

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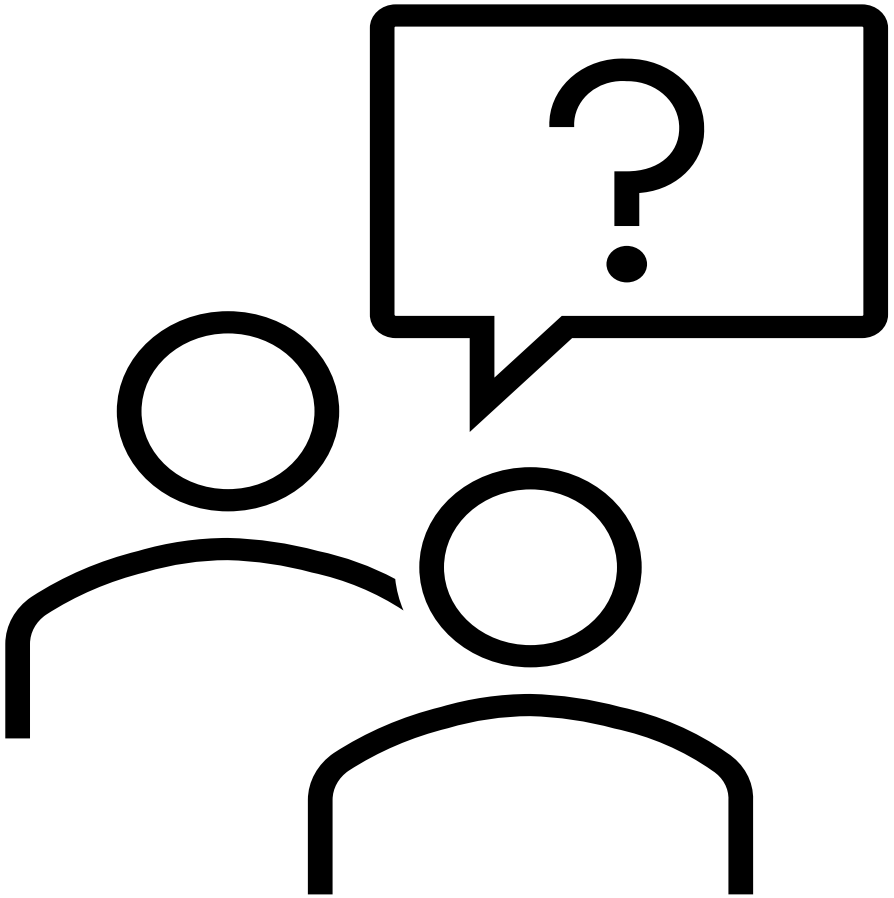
Information Literacy



Questions to ask to check reliability of information

Spotting fake information

Questions to ask -

- What?
- Who?
- When?
- URLs

What

Relevancy

Validity

Accuracy

Bias

Evidence

Who

The author

Qualifications

Aim

Formal or personal

Reviewed

When

- Date published/created
- **Last updated**
- Use your knowledge

URL

- URL ending

www.gov.scot (Scottish Government)

www.strath.ac.uk (UK academic institution)

www.gov.nz (Location New Zealand)

- **Security**

https:// or

Assess using What, Who, When criteria

30 seconds to reflect

Type red, amber or green in chat

DO NOT press send until we say

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Resources

Health Literacy e-learning:
You can Make a Difference
learn.nes.nhs.scot/26672/health-literacy

Public Health Scotland – The link between Health Literacy and Health Inequalities:
www.healthscotland.scot/learning-resources/the-link-between-health-literacy-and-health-inequalities

Health Literacy Place website:
www.healthliteracyplace.org.uk

Images from:
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