

Chapter 1 Lesson 4: Promoting Health and Wellness

Introduction:

As you learned in this lesson, whether you are health literate can influence your total health more than age, income, or education. Just what does it mean to be health literate? In its *Healthy People 2010* report, the U.S. government came up with its own definition. The site below tells you more about what health literacy is and about all the ways it can affect your health.

Links to Explore:

Health Literacy

<http://nnlm.gov/outreach/consumer/hlthlit.html>

Directions:

- Click on the link and read the article on health literacy from the National Network of Libraries of Medicine.
 - Then answer the following questions:
1. How does *Healthy People 2010* define health literacy?
 2. Give three examples of tasks patients need to be able to carry out.
 3. About how many Americans have difficulty understanding and using health information?
 4. Identify four factors that can affect people's level of health literacy.
 5. Explain three ways in which low health literacy can contribute to a higher rate of death from cancer.
 6. What is the estimated cost to society of additional health care costs due to low health literacy?

Answers:

1. The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions
2. Any three of the following:
 - Understanding instructions on prescription drug bottles, appointment slips, medical education brochures, doctor's directions and consent forms
 - Negotiating complex health care systems
 - Evaluating information for credibility and quality
 - Analyzing relative risks and benefits
 - Calculating dosages
 - Interpreting test results
 - Locating health information
 - Articulating their health concerns and describing their symptoms accurately
 - Asking pertinent questions of physicians

- Understanding spoken medical advice or treatment directions
3. Ninety million people, or nearly half the population
 4. Lack of educational opportunity, learning disabilities, age-related cognitive declines, and declining reading abilities beyond the last year of school completed
 5. All of the following:
 - Patients may be diagnosed with cancer at a later state because they do not understand cancer screening information.
 - Patients with cancer may not receive the best treatments for their needs because they do not understand their treatment options.
 - Patients may not make the best choices about which treatments to have because they do not understand informed consent documents.
 6. About \$73 billion

Additional Links to Explore:

Use the links below to gather additional information on the activity topic. When appropriate, have students extend their research to include important concepts contained in these Web sites.

Low Health Literacy Skills Increase Annual Health Care Expenditures by \$73 Billion

http://www.agingsociety.org/agingsociety/publications/fact/fact_low.html

Ask Me 3

<http://www.askme3.org/>

AMA Foundation: Health Literacy

<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/8115.html>