



Health Literacy  
SAN DIEGO

# When Words Get in the Way: Health Literacy Training

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THE SAN DIEGO  
COUNCIL ON LITERACY  
IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE



COMMUNITY HEALTH  
IMPROVEMENT PARTNERS  
*making a difference together*

# TRAINING OUTLINE

- Introduction to Health Literacy
- What You Can Do to Promote Health Literacy
- Improving Health Literacy When Working with Patients
  - Identifying Patients with Low Health Literacy
  - Strategies and Methods for Better Communicating  
with Patients with Low Health Literacy
- Post-test/Evaluation



A collaborative effort between Community Health Improvement Partners (CHIP) and the San Diego Council on Literacy (SDCOL)



- Report: *When Words Get in the Way: A Collaborative Plan to Address Health Literacy in San Diego County*
- Health Literacy San Diego website:  
[www.healthliteracysd.org](http://www.healthliteracysd.org)



**Can everyone recognize  
a teaspoon?**



**Are charts easy to read?**

# Institute of Medicine Health Literacy Video

# Why is this important?

Patients with limited health literacy have trouble:

- Scheduling Doctors Appointments
- Sharing health information with providers
- Filling out health histories
- Acting on instructions and taking medicine
- Adopting health promoting behaviors



# Why is this important?

- 36% of Americans have limited health literacy skills.  
(NAAL, 2003)
- Up to 80% of patients forget what their doctor said as soon as they leave the doctor's office.  
(NAAL, 2003)
- Nearly 50% of what patients remember is recalled incorrectly.  
(NAAL, 2003)
- Nearly 1/3 of Americans are not able to comprehend health literacy quantitative skills such as “Give 1/4 teaspoon daily” or “Lose 10% of body weight”.

Institute of Medicine: *A Prescription to End All Confusion* (2004).

# A Patient's Perspective



# House Video

# IDENTIFYING PATIENTS WITH LOW HEALTH LITERACY

## Myths and Stereotypes

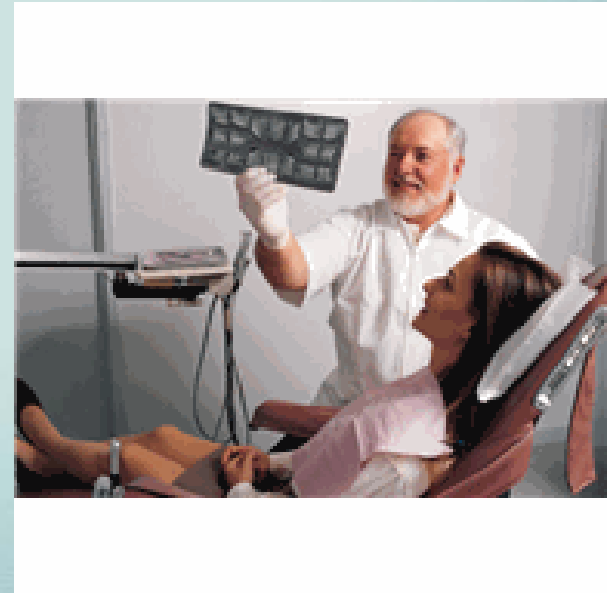
- Billionaire executives have proficient health literacy skills
- Lack an interest in their learning
- College Graduates
- People can tell you they can't read

*You can't tell by looking and you can't expect patients to tell you.  
Many have developed skills to hide low literacy levels.*

WHAT  
You  
CAN DO  
ABOUT IT

# WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

- Health Literacy is Important for everyone
- Signs

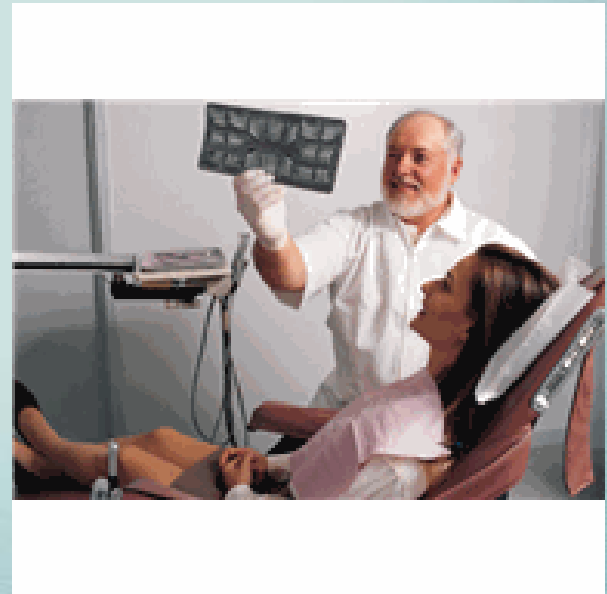


# HEALTH LITERACY FRIENDLY SIGNS: VISTA COMMUNITY CLINIC



# WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

- Health Literacy is Important for all Staff
- Directional Signs
- Outreach Materials



# Read through the following list of words:

Strike

Value

Net

Using

Return

Calculate

Spot

Set

Today

Zero

Below

Expected

Option

Negative

Exercise

Equal

Probability

Underlying

Present

Price

Read the following passage “When Does Exercising Give You An Advantage?”

**“If you’re using expected return to calculate the option’s probability-weighted net present value, if you set the expected return below zero, the time value will go negative. If you set the strike price equal to zero, the option value will equal the exercise-today value, which will be equal to the spot price of the underlying.”**

Source: Black-Sholes Made Easy by Jerry Marlow, p. 193

# CREATING EASY TO READ MATERIALS

- Simple wording, short sentences
- Use pictures

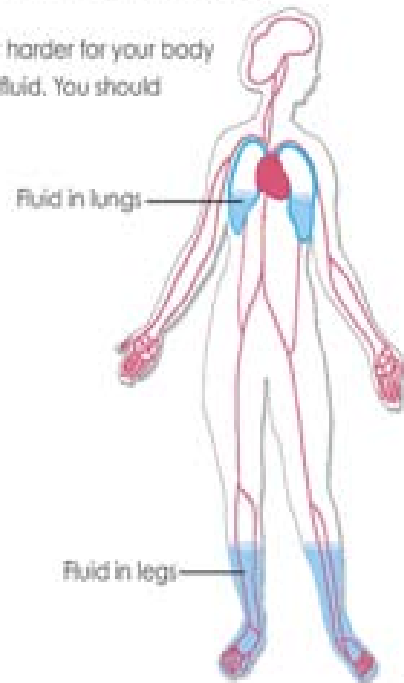
# Congestive Heart Failure

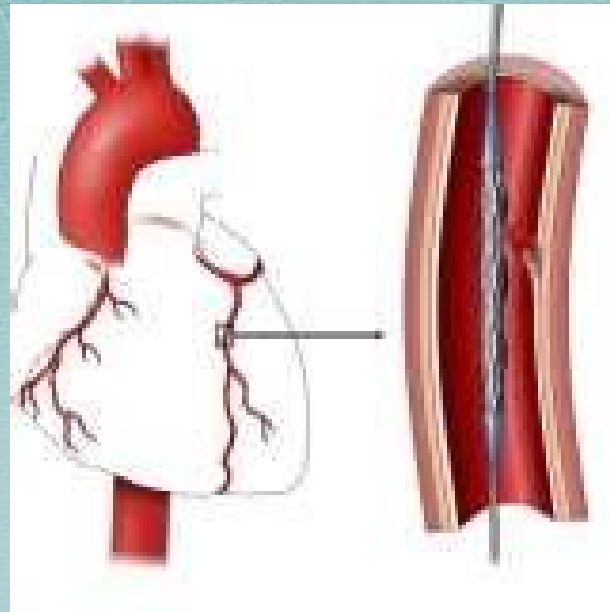
With congestive heart failure, the heart cannot pump the blood well. As a result, blood doesn't flow well.

Fluid leaks out of your blood vessels and backs up in the lungs and the legs.

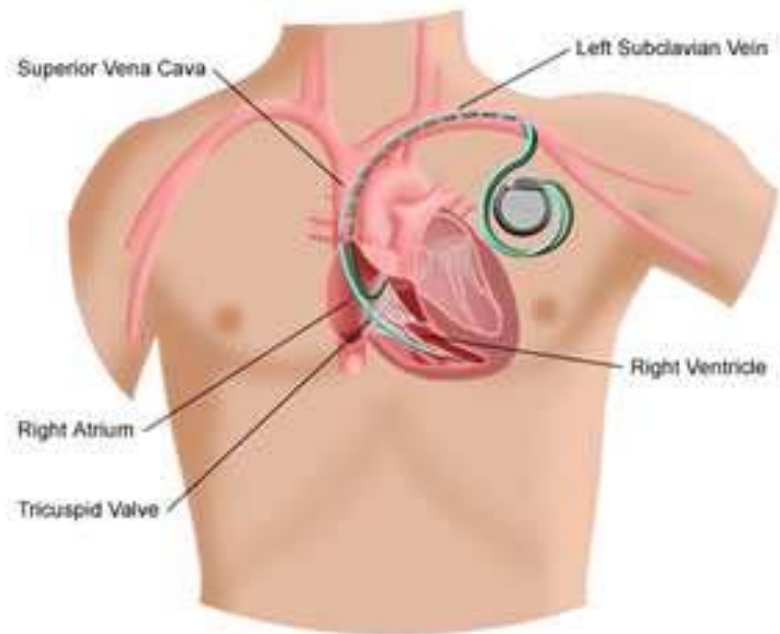


Salt makes it harder for your body to get rid of fluid. You should avoid salt.





### Dual-Chamber Pacemaker



Name:           Maria          

Information on your prescription for:

**Amoxicillin**

To treat an infection of the throat

**5 mL (1 teaspoon) by mouth  
3 times a day for 10 days**

Nombre:           Maria          

Información sobre su receta para:

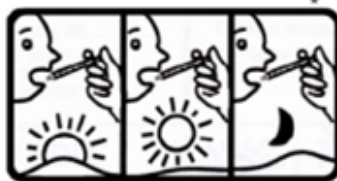
**Amoxicillin**

Para tratar una infección de la garganta

**5 mL (1 cucharadita) por la boca  
3 veces al día por 10 días**



Shake well  
Agite bien



Take 3 times a day by mouth  
Tome 3 veces al día por al boca



Store in refrigerator  
Guarde en la nevera



Give this medicine for 10 days,  
even if your child is feeling better  
Dé la medicina por 10 días, aunque  
su niño(a) empiece a sentirse mejor



If you have questions call  
the clinic (212) 562-5524  
Si tiene preguntas llame a  
la clínica (212) 562-5524

Read instructions from your pharmacist about your prescription. Lea las instrucciones de su farmacéutico acerca de su receta.

The H.E.L.P. Project Bellevue Hospital Pediatric Resource Center (212) 562-5524

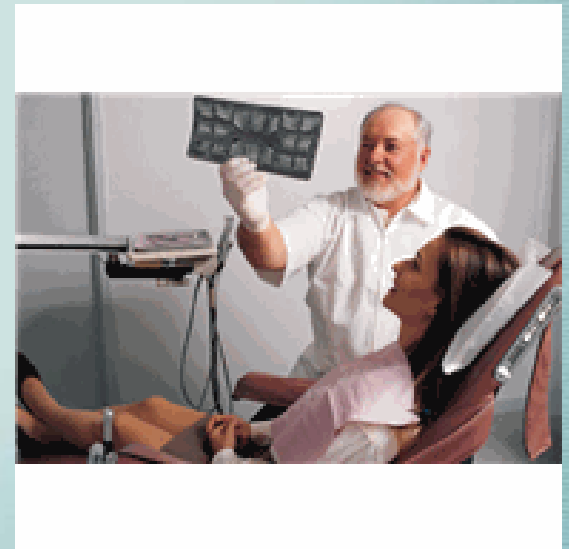
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I am capable  
of reading at a  
college level.  
However, this  
is **not** college  
and I prefer  
to get my  
information  
quickly & easily.



# WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION

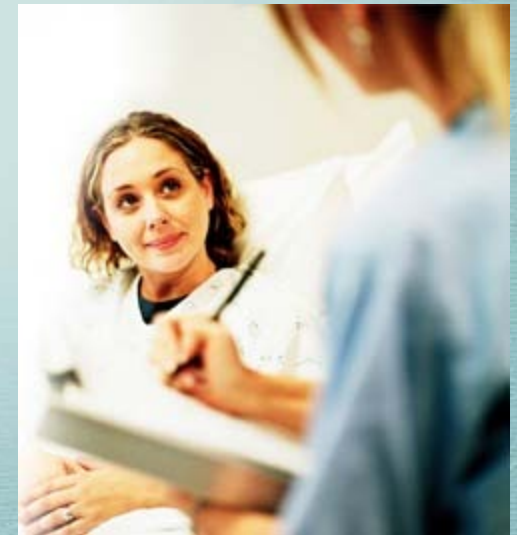
- Health Literacy is Important for all Staff
- Directional Signs
- Outreach Materials
- Cultural Competency
- Translators and Interpreters



# IDENTIFYING PATIENTS WITH LOW HEALTH LITERACY

Recognize Red Flag Behaviors

- Poor Adherence to Medical Advice
- Vague Responses and Excuses
- Other Clues



# COMMUNICATING WITH PATIENTS

- Strip it Down
  - Mix it Up
- Bring it Home



# COMMUNICATING WITH PATIENTS

- Strip it Down
  - Mix it Up



# ALTERNATIVE WORD LIST

Medical Term

Plain Language Alternative

Oral



By Mouth

Abdomen



Stomach

Nausea



Feel like you have to throw  
up

Vertigo



Dizziness

3 times more likely



Use physical comparisons

# COMMUNICATING WITH PATIENTS

- Strip it Down
  - Mix it Up
- Bring it Home



# Hypertension

(High Blood Pressure)



# Your MEDICATIONS



Medication	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Bedtime
  Aspirin EC 81mg	 1 pill with food			
  Metoprolol 100mg (Lopressor)	 1 pill		 1 pill	
  Furosemide 40mg (Lasix)	 2 pills	 1 pill		
  Sotalol 160mg (Betapace)	 1 pill without food		 1 pill without food	
  Warfarin 5mg (Coumadin)				 1 pill
  Metformin 500mg (Glucophage)	 1 pill with food		 1 pill with food	

Figure 1. Sample of tool

# BRING IT HOME

Confirm Understanding:

- Ask Open Ended Questions
- Ask Me 3
- Teach Back Method

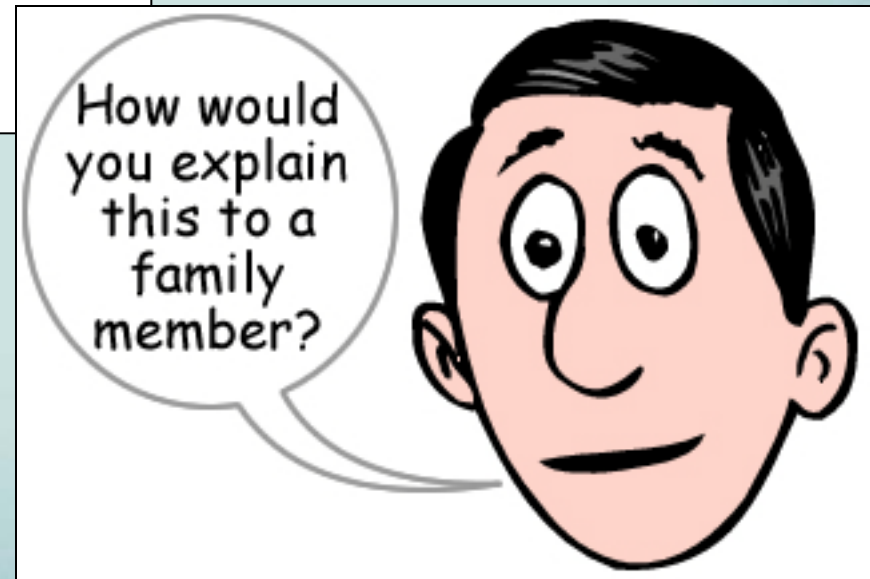
# Ask-me 3

1. What is my main problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why is it important for me to do this?



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

# TEACH BACK METHOD



# TEACH BACK METHOD

Teach Back Scripts:

- **Please explain to me** how to test your blood sugar.
- If you were trying to explain this to your friend, **what would you say?**
- Let's review if you miss one dose of medicine. What do you do?
- **Show me how** your inhaler works.

# TAKE AWAYS

- There are lots of ways to identify patients with low health literacy - but you can't tell just by looking
- Using health literacy evidence-based tools & strategies can improve patient-provider communication
  1. Open Ended-Questions
  2. Ask Me 3
  3. Teach Back Method

Check out our website:  
[healthliteracysd.org](http://healthliteracysd.org)



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Partnership for Clear Health Communication.

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

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