

Learn about the use of Plain Language
Special topic: Health Literacy and Older Adults

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Arizona Health Literacy Coalition

The AZ Health Literacy Coalition has focused on health literacy issues affecting older adults. We have discussed issues related to medication management, hospital discharge and the transition to the home, communication with older adults. A handout was created for the Caregiver Conference on May 30, reminding readers of the importance to ask questions.

We continue to have regular conference calls every other month. Everyone interested in health literacy is invited to participate.

Next conference call: Tuesday August 8, 2017 (2 pm).

Learn more about the [Arizona Health Literacy Coalition](#).

Please forward this newsletter to others; to subscribe, visit www.azhealthliteracy.org/join or subscribe [here](#).

Special Topic:

Health Literacy and Older Adults by Jutta Ulrich

People 65 and older make nearly twice as many physician office visits per year than adults 45 to 65. However, an estimated two-thirds of older people may be

unable to understand the information given to them about their prescription medications. Over two thirds of adults over 60 have difficulty using print materials, forms or performing calculations.

Older adults have the same health literacy difficulties that younger persons have, but they may be more pronounced.

- Older adults often have more than one medical issue; they often take several medications.
- The older generation may not be comfortable asking questions – they were raised to listen to the health care provider and not question what they hear.
- With age, vision and hearing may be less effective, making health communication more difficult.

Tips for communicating with older adults (and adults all ages):

- Slow down a little.
- Suggest that a friend or family member go along to medical appointments.
- Encourage them to ask questions and take notes.
- Be aware of issues with vision, hearing, or memory
- Treat older patients as adults; don't use materials designed for children.

For more information and links to useful tools on health literacy and older adults, please visit <http://www.azhealthliteracy.org/older-adults.html>.

Health Literacy Basics: What is Plain Language?

Submitted by Janice Sgambelluri, RN MSN

Plain language (also called Plain English) is communication your audience can understand the first time they read or hear it. Language that is plain to one set of readers may not be plain to others. Written material is in plain language if your audience can:

- Find what they need
- Understand what they find and
- Use what they find to meet their needs

<http://www.plainlanguage.gov/whatisPL/index.cfm>

Examples

Annually → Yearly or Every Year

Dermatologist → Skin doctor

Arthritis → Pain in joints

Diabetes → elevated sugar in the blood

Cardiovascular → Having to do with the heart

Hypertension → high blood pressure

Plain language Resources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/other/pdf/everydaywords-060216-final.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/pdf/checklist.pdf>

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/healthliteracy/plain-language-resources/>

<http://healthliteracy.com/?s=Plain+language>

Events - News

Arizona Rural Women's Health Symposium, June 28-29, 2017, Sedona AZ

<http://azrwhn.org/womens-health-symposium>

2017 Arizona Rural Health Conference, July 25, 2017, Flagstaff

University of Arizona, <https://crh.arizona.edu/calendar/rural-health-conference-2017>

Arizona Health Equity Conference October 12, 2017

Arizona Department of Health Services. <http://azhealth.gov/health-equity> or email healthequityconf@mayo.edu.

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