



# NAVIGATING HEALTH LITERACY

Health literacy is a person's understanding of basic health information and services needed to make positive and informed health decisions.

Since health literacy affects an individual's ability to navigate the health care system and engage in self-health management, low health literacy is often linked to lack of care and poor health outcomes.

## Health Literacy Tips

**Keep it simple. Not everyone speaks health care!**

Jargon, acronyms and medical terms never heard before can be overwhelming and intimidating, especially to persons not familiar with the health care system.

- Use plain language, and define technical and medical terms the first time they are used. Avoid general use of acronyms.
- Present the most important information first.
- Break complex information into smaller points.
- Ask open-ended questions using "what" and "how" to avoid "yes" and "no" answers. ("What questions do you have?" instead of "Do you have any questions?")
- Check for understanding by asking the client to repeat back to you important concepts and information.

Terms To Avoid	Use Instead
Adherence	Taking medication as prescribed
High-risk negative	Any HIV-negative person who engages in behavior that might increase chances of getting HIV
Peer support	Support system
Prescriber	Doctor, physician assistant or nurse practitioner
Unknown status	Untested for HIV

## Terms You Might Want To Explain

<b>Co-pay</b>	Fixed amount to be paid by insured person per prescription
<b>Co-insurance</b>	Fixed percentage of prescription cost to be paid by insured
<b>Deductible</b>	Amount of health care cost, including prescriptions, that must be paid by the insured person before insurance begins to cover costs
<b>Exposure</b>	Possible contact with the HIV virus through unprotected sexual contact or needle sharing
<b>Patient assistance</b>	Helps patients who lack health insurance or prescription drug coverage obtain the medications they need. Patient Assistance Programs (PAPs) are typically offered by pharmaceutical companies to provide free or low-cost prescription drugs to qualifying individuals.