

# Health PEI

## Tips to Improve Patient and Client Health Literacy

Improving health literacy is crucial to ensuring patients and clients understand their health conditions and treatments. Here are 10 tips for healthcare practitioners to enhance health literacy:

1. **Use Plain Language:** Avoid medical jargon. Use simple, common words that patients can easily understand. Ask yourself, “How would I explain this to someone in the 7<sup>th</sup> Grade?”
2. **Speak Slowly and Clearly:** Take your time explaining information to ensure patients can follow along.
3. **Use the Teach-back Method:** Ask patients to repeat the information back to you in their own words to ensure they understand.
4. **Provide Patient-Friendly Written Materials:** Give patients easy-to-read written materials that summarize key points discussed during the visit.
5. **Use Visual Aids:** When possible, incorporate diagrams, charts, and other visual tools to help explain complex information.
6. **Highlight 1 to 3 Key Points:** At the end of appointments, reiterate the most important things for them to remember.
7. **Encourage Questions:** Ask patients if they have any questions during and at the end of visits. Take the time to ensure you’ve adequately answered their questions.
8. **Practice Active Listening:** Pay close attention to patients’ verbal and non-verbal body language and respond thoughtfully.
9. **Practice Cultural Sensitivity:** Be aware of and respect cultural differences that may affect how patients understand and use health information.
10. **Leverage Technology:** If available, help the patient access websites, apps or patient portals where they can find reliable health information.

## Additional Resources

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/index.html>

<https://www.nih.gov/sites/default/files/institutes/clear-communication/health-literacy-tips-updated.pdf>

<https://www.ihl.org/insights/8-ways-improve-health-literacy>

<https://health.gov/our-work/national-health-initiatives/health-literacy/>