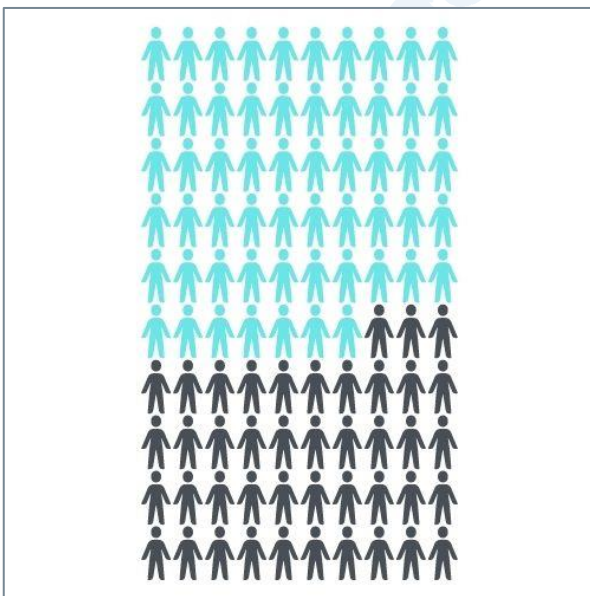




Health literacy

Health literacy is about people having enough knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence to use health information. This allows them to be active partners in their care, and to use health and social care systems.

In England, 43% of 16-65 year olds find it hard to understand written health information.



In England 61% of 16-65 year olds find it hard to understand written health information including numbers



[Rowlands et al. 2015](#)

Health literacy in Berkshire

Low health literacy levels in the local authorities in Berkshire range between 48% in Wokingham and 62% in Reading and 72% in Slough compared to a national average of 60%. This means that even in areas with better levels of health literacy almost 1 in 2 people cannot understand health information which includes written information and numbers.

<http://healthliteracy.geodata.uk/>



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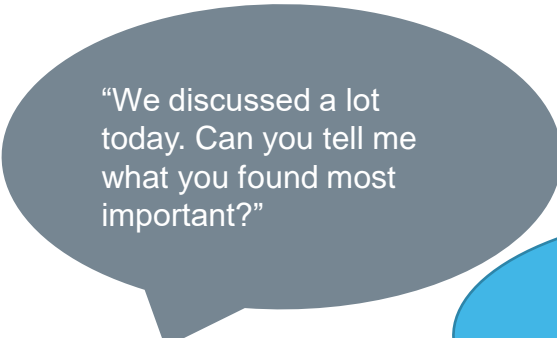
Techniques to support health literacy

We should never make assumptions about a person's health literacy level as it is not always clear. Everyone's health literacy can be affected at any time, for example, when receiving new or distressing information, not having glasses or hearing aids at appointments. We recommend that these techniques are used with everyone that we come into contact with.

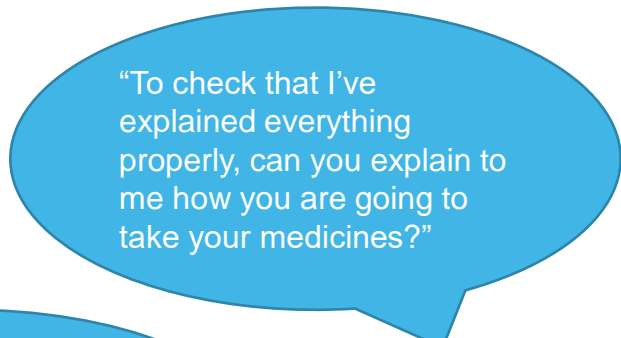
Teach back

Teach back is a useful way to check that the information you have given has been understood by getting the person you are talking with to "teach back" to you what you have said.

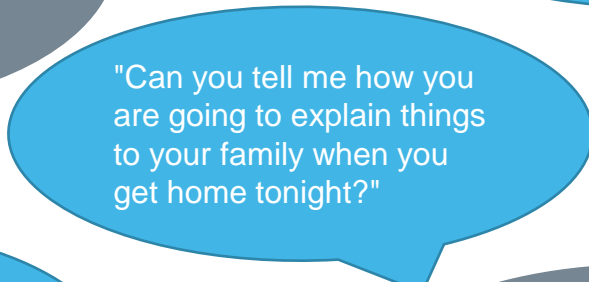
Examples of what this might be:



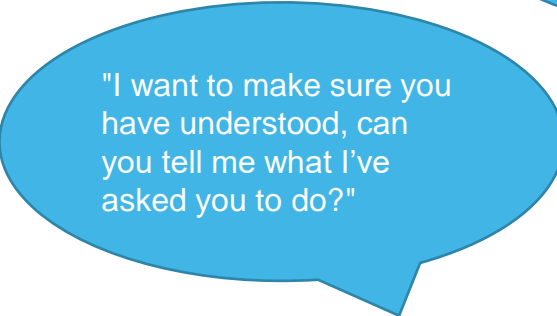
"We discussed a lot today. Can you tell me what you found most important?"



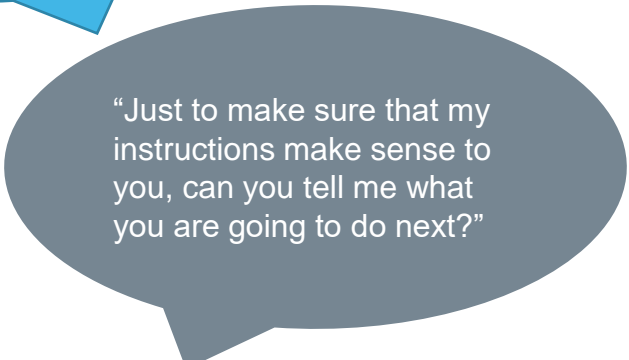
"To check that I've explained everything properly, can you explain to me how you are going to take your medicines?"



"Can you tell me how you are going to explain things to your family when you get home tonight?"



"I want to make sure you have understood, can you tell me what I've asked you to do?"



"Just to make sure that my instructions make sense to you, can you tell me what you are going to do next?"

If they don't explain it correctly you explain and recheck again.

You can also use "show me" to check someone has understood an action. For example "Show me how you are going to use your inhaler"

You can use Teach back with chunk and check.



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10 top tips for using Teach back

1. Use a caring tone of voice and attitude.
2. Display comfortable body language and make eye contact.
3. Use plain language.
4. Ask the patient to explain back, using their own words.
5. Use non-shaming, open-ended questions.
6. Avoid asking questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no.
7. Reassure that the responsibility to explain clearly is on you, the healthcare professional.
8. If the patient is not able to teach back correctly, explain again and re-check.
9. Use reader-friendly print materials to support learning.
10. Document use of and patient response to teach back.



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Chunk and check

We often need to give people lots of information and they can struggle to understand and remember a long list. Chunk and check can be used with teach back to help understanding. You break down the information you are giving into smaller chunks. After each chunk you use teach back technique to check that you have been understood. It also allows people to ask questions as you go instead of saving them for the end.

An example of this might be:

Mrs Smith, could you just confirm your address please? Thank you

There are two lots of tablets here. These ones are to be taken with water after a meal, three times a day

Take these smaller ones twice a day, preferably on an empty stomach or several hours after eating

Always offer to help with forms and paperwork

Offer support to everyone who needs to fill in forms and paperwork as we know that it is not always clear who needs help. Routinely offering support can reduce the pressure for those who may struggle to complete forms and paperwork. It can also help you get the information you need.

Training

Want to learn more about health literacy, how it affects patients and what you can do to support them? We provide a 90 minute health literacy course. [View more information and dates.](#)

Health Education England have provided a free health literacy elearning programme. [View more information and register for access.](#)

Berkshire Healthcare staff [View this elearning programme on Nexus eLearning.](#)



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