

# ADULT HEALTH BULLETIN

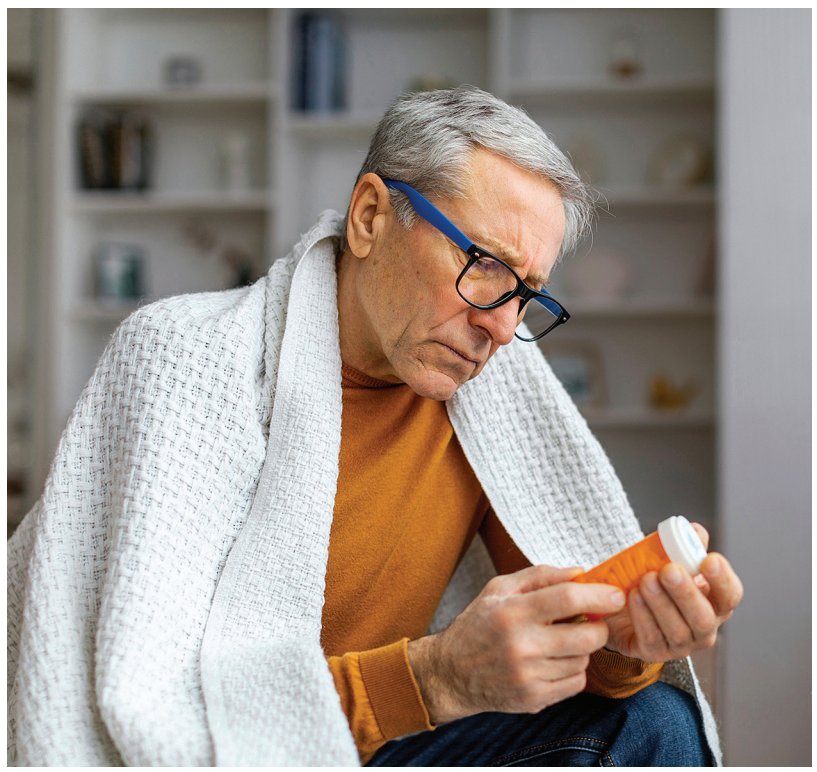


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## THIS MONTH'S TOPIC

# HOW IS YOUR HEALTH LITERACY?



**H**appy Health Literacy Month! You might have heard about “health literacy” before, as it has become a hot-button topic in the past few years. Or maybe, this is your first time hearing the term. That’s OK, too! While the term combines two words that most people know, it means more than just whether you can read health-related information. The term “health literacy” refers to a person’s ability to find, understand, and use information and services to make choices related to their overall well-being. To unpack that definition further, let’s break it down.

- **Finding health information:** Do you know where to go to find reliable, up-to-date health information? Do you feel like you can ask your doctor or other health-care provider questions that you have?

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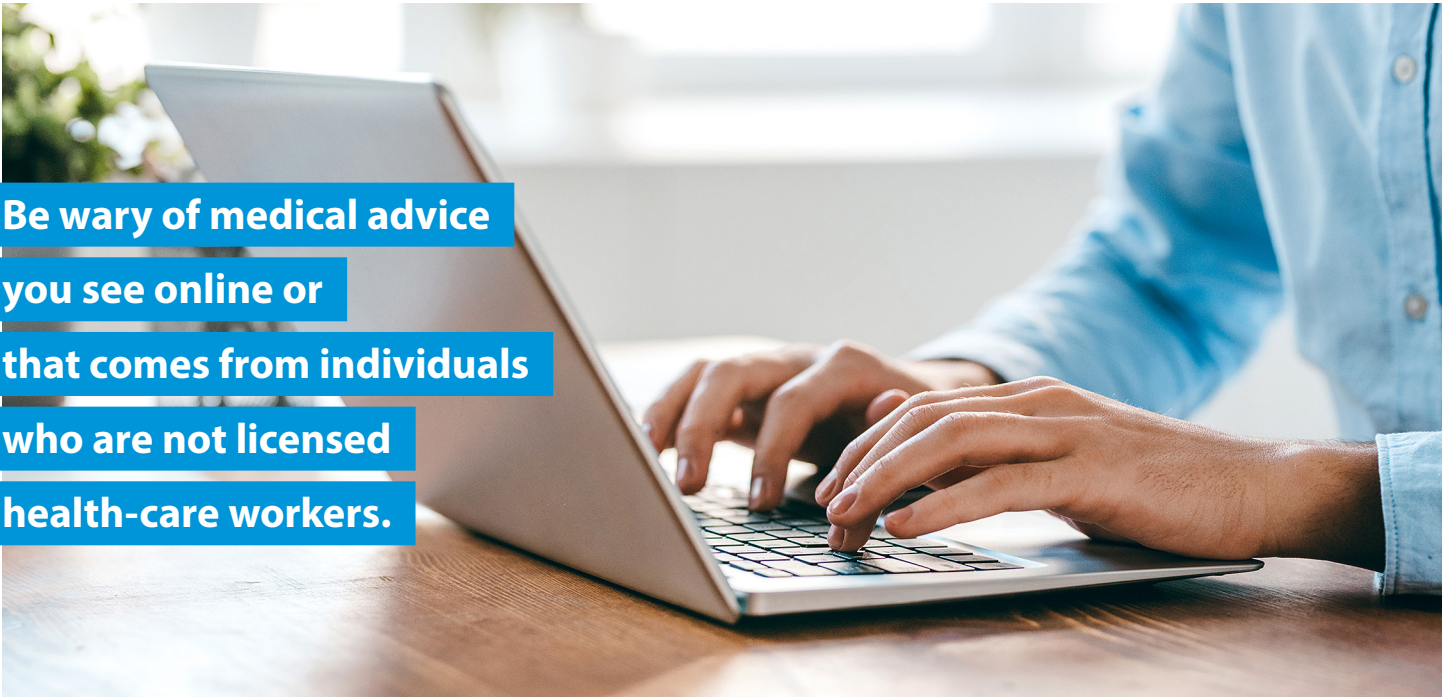
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that comes from individuals  
who are not licensed  
health-care workers.**

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- **Understanding health information:** When you read health information, does it make sense? Or when your doctor tells you information about your own health conditions or gives you instructions, do you know what they are saying?
- **Using health information and services:** Can you take the information your doctor gives you and use it to make choices about your health or health care? Do you know what to do when you leave a doctor's appointment to help you feel better? Do you know why you are taking each medication? If your doctor ordered a test, do you know why? Do you know how to follow up with your doctor if you do not feel better? Do you know how to act on the results of needed tests?

All these skills are a part of having health literacy. Having health literacy is connected to having a higher quality of life. People who can understand and use health information to make good choices are more likely to use health care when they need it, follow medical advice, and have positive outcomes. So how can someone increase their health literacy? The best place to start is to be willing to ask questions and think about where your health information comes from.

The most trustworthy medical information comes from people who are trained in providing

medical care and places that have the community's health in mind. Your primary care doctor is a great and trusted source for asking questions about medical issues. Many hospitals and doctors' offices have trained community health workers, social workers, or patient navigators who can answer your questions or help you find needed answers about your treatment plan or care. Be wary of medical advice you see online or that comes from individuals who are not licensed health-care workers.

If you have trouble understanding what your health-care provider is telling you, speak up! Be willing to ask your medical provider to:

- repeat themselves,
- slow down,
- explain a different way,
- draw a picture or use a diagram, or
- give information in writing that you can take home.

**REFERENCE:**

<https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/health-literacy>

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