



Making your health care choices easier

Health care can be confusing

We often hear new terms when we're getting health care. Many people are shy about asking what they mean. They may be too embarrassed to ask. Or they may feel like they don't even know what questions they have. It can be overwhelming and even scary.

Health literacy affects everyone

Making health care choices shouldn't be difficult. But it's not always easy to understand what's going on with your health. Most of us don't fully understand:

- How our bodies work
- What medical terms mean
- How to weigh the risks and the benefits of treatment options

How we find, understand and use important information about your health is called health literacy. And improving your health literacy skills can help you make better health decisions.

Your everyday choices matter

You may not realize it, but you're constantly making choices about your health. Some choices are easy — like getting health care after an accident. Others take more thought — like choosing between treatment options.

These five steps can help you be more health literate. And help you make choices about your health care:

1

Make sure you understand the health issue or concern

Your doctor doesn't expect you to be an expert. No question is too silly or dumb when it comes to your health. Don't be afraid to ask for an explanation.



2

Ask what your options are

You need to know what health care choices you have. And how each one will get you closer to your goal. You can also ask what will happen if you don't do anything.



3

Learn about your choices

You can make some notes about each option. You'll want to compare the benefits to the risks. There's a lot of good information online. But some isn't reliable, so be sure to choose your sources carefully.



4

Think about which choice would work best for you

Sharing the decision with your medical team is important. A lot of factors can affect your choice — like past experiences and culture. You know yourself best.



5

Prepare an action plan

Think about what you need to do to get ready for your treatment or surgery. What do you need to do on the day of? Ask if you'll need help at home, supplies or equipment. And what you should watch for afterward.



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