



Genesee County Health Department

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Re: Health Literacy Awareness Month

October is Health Literacy Awareness Month. The Genesee County Health Department wants to help you communicate your concerns with your health care professional. “Health Literacy” is the ability to read, understand and act upon health information. A significant gap exists between the way health care issues are communicated and the ability of most people to understand them.

All people, and not just those with limited reading skills or people for whom English is a second language, are affected by limited health literacy. Nearly 9 out of 10 adults have difficulty using routine health information. When people struggle with understanding how to prevent and manage health conditions, they are more likely to skip necessary medical tests, have a harder time with their diabetes or high blood pressure and visit the emergency room more often. They also tend to make mistakes with their medications, and fail to understand nutrition labels.

There are also several things that you can do to improve your understanding of health related information:

- Before you leave for your appointment make a list of your symptoms and when they started. Bring a list of your current medications, write down your questions, and bring paper to take notes.

Better Life Through Better Health

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Main Phone 810-257-3612 ♦ Visit us at: www.gchd.us

- Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist to use familiar language and write down their information.
- Ask questions if something is not clear. Let the health care person know if what they are telling you is confusing in any way. Ask for written materials written in plain language.
- Make sure you know who to call with any questions you may have after you get home.
- Ask your librarian how to find clearly written and relevant health information. Take classes offered by librarians on Internet and social media tools.
- Attend health education programs at your local community centers or faith-based organization. Request these programs if they aren't offered.
- Request that local schools teach kids about health education and deliver clear health messages to kids, like proper hand washing techniques.

Visit the Genesee County Health Department website at www.gchd.us for more information. Our motto is ***Better Life through Better Health.***