



BREAKING BARRIERS:

health literacy for a healthier tomorrow



Health literacy shapes how people **access, understand, and use information** to make decisions about their health. Across the U.S., **millions** face challenges with complex medical language, unfamiliar digital tools, and the challenge of navigating care—especially during emergencies or when language barriers exist.

Recognizing these challenges, as well as the changing ways people seek health information and the influence of **culture, technology, and communication styles**, reveals how health literacy directly shapes well-being and outcomes across diverse communities.

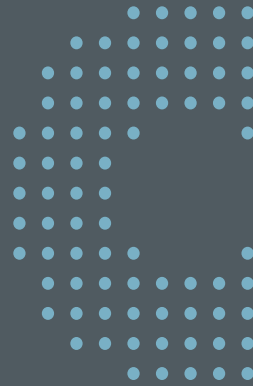


what's getting in the way of health literacy?

Health literacy is the foundation of informed decision-making and equitable care.



In the United States, over **90 million** adults face challenges in understanding and using health information, a reality that shapes outcomes across every community.¹



Mental health literacy is equally vital.

Individuals with higher health literacy are more likely to recognize symptoms, seek help, and participate in preventive care, reducing stigma and improving overall well-being.^{2,3}

obstacles to health literacy are multifaceted

Structural and contextual barriers:



Complex medical language and jargon often exclude those without advanced education or English proficiency.



Digital health tools, while promising, can widen gaps for those without reliable internet access or digital skills.



Emergency situations—from natural disasters to pandemics—demand clear, actionable information, yet many struggle to navigate rapidly changing guidance.

Evolving preferences for consuming health information:



Many rely on accessible sources such as television, social media, and community leaders, rather than dense medical websites or lengthy brochures.⁴



In-person communication remains vital, especially for those with limited digital access or trust in online sources.⁵



Family members and caregivers often serve as essential intermediaries, translating and contextualizing information.⁶



the right approach: meeting people where they are

► ► ► Addressing health literacy requires a **multi-dimensional** approach:



Use clear, straightforward language and avoid unnecessary jargon.



Provide information in multiple formats and languages to maximize accessibility.⁷



Incorporate visual aids—infographics, diagrams, and videos—to make complex concepts memorable.⁸



Ensure content is culturally relevant and tailored to the needs of diverse communities.⁷



As marketers, we can help bridge the gap as health literacy is not a static skill but a dynamic, context-dependent process.

Recognizing the interplay of language, technology, culture, and trust is essential for designing communications that empowers people to take charge of their health—regardless of where they begin.

Ready to learn more about topics like this?

Hit us up at say@heysummerfriday.com check out our [insights page](#).

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