

Health Literacy

What you need to know

ability to access, understand, appraise and apply health information

Definition Health literacy is the capacity to make sound health decisions in the context of every day life – at home, in the community, at the workplace, in the health-care system, in the market place, and in the political arena. Ref. 1

Health literacy in Europe — a few facts



6 out of 10

Europeans have used the internet to retrieve health information. Ref. 2

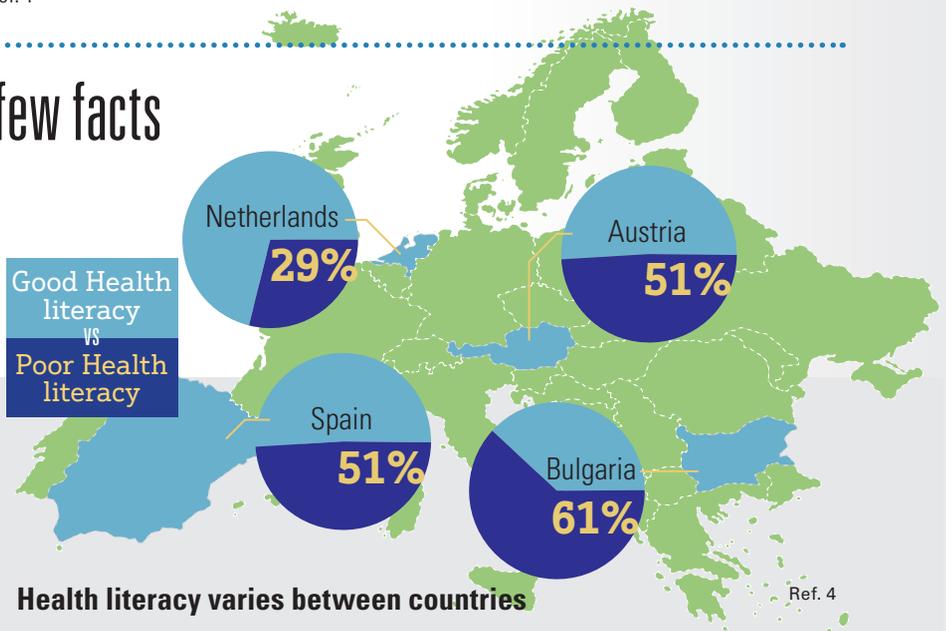
Health literacy is a challenge for

1 out of 2 people

Ref. 5



Good Health literacy
vs
Poor Health literacy



Even people with advanced education and reading skills can face health literacy challenges.



Vulnerable groups include:

elderly

Ref. 3

people with low education

people with low income



Ref. 3

Why is health literacy important?

Low health literacy makes it difficult for you to ...

Ref. 3



understand doctor's advice

read a package leaflet with information about the medicine

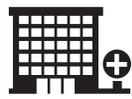
maintain a healthy life style

find the right treatment

follow a vaccination chart

fill out complex forms

Low health literacy is a cause for...



Unnecessary hospital visits



Poor health outcomes including early death



Inefficient health care spending

Ref. 3

Health literacy skills...

- 1 Help people **prevent diseases** at the right time
- 2 Help **manage chronic diseases** like diabetes
- 3 **Reduce medical mistakes** because patients are better informed
- 4 **Make healthcare more effective and efficient** - thanks to active citizens and patients who follow a healthier lifestyle

Ref. 3

Promoting health literacy requires a multi-stakeholder approach



What needs to happen next:

- 1 Develop a **European strategy on Health Literacy**
- 2 Set **defined health targets** for improvement on health literacy levels across Europe
- 3 Develop a **monitoring process** to evaluate health literacy levels across Europe

Ref. 5

References:

- Ref. 1: This definition of health literacy is based on the one of Kickbusch and Maag, see: Kickbusch I and Maag D Health Literacy. In: Kris Heggenhougen and Stella Quah, editors International Encyclopedia of Public Health, Vol 3. San Diego: Academic Press; 2008. pp. 204-211
- Ref. 2: See DG Connect (2014), Europeans becoming enthusiastic users of online health information; <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/europeans-becoming-enthusiastic-users-online-health-information> (20/04/2016)

- Ref. 3: WHO Europe (2013), Health Literacy. The solid facts; edited by Ilona Kickbusch, Jürgen M. Pelikan, Franklin Apfel and Agis D. Tsouros; <http://www.euro.who.int/en/publications/abstracts/health-literacy-the-solid-facts> (20/04/2016)
- Ref. 4: See Sorensen K et al. (2015), Health literacy in Europe: comparative results of the European health literacy survey (HLS-EU); Eur J Public Health. 25(6):1053-8
- Ref. 5: EPF, Health Literacy Europe, CPME, University of Maastricht, MSD Europe (2016), Making health literacy a priority in EU policy. Health Literacy Consensus Paper; <http://www.eu-patient.eu/whatwedo/Policy/Health-Literacy/> (20/04/2016)

This infographic has been created by the Health Literacy Coalition (European Patients' Forum (EPF), Health Literacy Europe, MSD Europe Inc., Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME) and University of Maastricht) and is intended for use by policy makers within the European Union.

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