

Our Community. Our Health.

Independence 

 The Philadelphia Tribune

About Our Community. Our Health.

The award-winning **Our Community. Our Health.** campaign seeks to empower individuals, families, and communities to take charge of their health. The campaign is a partnership between *The Philadelphia Tribune* and Independence Blue Cross. Learn more at ibx.com/ourhealth.

Health literacy

Health literacy refers to an individual's ability to find, understand, and use information to make health care decisions. It is a key driver of health outcomes. The **Our Community. Our Health.** campaign highlights the importance of health literacy and offers practical tips for building it. When people understand health information, they can more confidently manage their well-being.

Impact of health literacy

In the U.S., barriers to understanding health information create challenges that contribute to rising health care costs. This includes unnecessary hospitalizations and emergency room visits, as well as not taking advantage of health care activities that can delay or prevent development of chronic medical conditions.

- Nearly 9 out of 10 adults struggle to understand complex health information.
- When health information isn't clear or easy to use, people are more likely to rely on emergency care.
- Nearly 50% of people feel unprepared or uncomfortable when they visit the doctor.

Small steps to improve your health literacy

Better health starts with better understanding. Building health literacy can help you make more informed decisions — for you, your family, and your community. Here are some tips to build health literacy:

- When you visit your doctor, make sure to ask about preventive screenings. This will help you know more about your physical and mental health, and what you need to do to stay healthy.
- Ask your doctor to explain your health conditions, symptoms, and treatments in a way that you understand. You can consider bringing a friend or family member to appointments to take notes and offer support.
- Learn how to become your own health advocate. Ask your doctor for recommendations on where to find reliable, easy-to-use health information, and share what you learn with others.
- Request that health information be delivered to you in the way that works best. For example, in writing or electronically, through your member portal or email.
- Read the labels before taking any medicine. Check the name, ingredients, dosage, and instructions on when and how to take the medication.

Sources for the information presented in this fact sheet include: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Talking Points about Health Literacy* (2024); Free Library of Philadelphia, *Promoting Literacy* (2024); National Library of Medicine, *Health Literacy: Impact of Low Health Literacy on Patients' Health Outcomes* (2022); ProLiteracy, *Adult Literacy: A Path to Healthier Communities* (2025); SEPTA, *Community Health Needs Assessment* (2025)

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