

Health literacy in Ireland How much sugar is in this pot of yogurt?

Tuesday 12 November 2019



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Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

Outline



What is health literacy and numeracy and why are they important?



Health literacy-friendly approach



Communicating more effectively



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Literacy is ...



Literacy only has meaning **in contexts** of social practice.

There are **different** language and literacy practices ('literacies') in different contexts. For example: families, workplaces, health services, public services, community activities.

Each context has its own particular language, literacy and numeracy practices.

A beginner reader is not a beginner thinker.

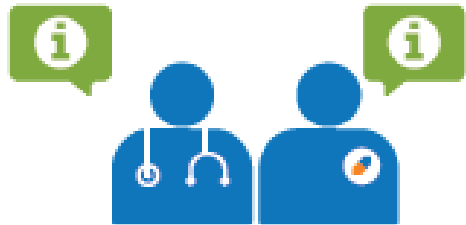


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What is health literacy and numeracy?

Health literacy and numeracy has two elements:



Health services communicate clearly and take account of possible health literacy and numeracy needs.



People understand health information correctly and can make an informed decision.

Your treatment is...



I can't believe I have...

It is about mutual understanding



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What is health numeracy?

Health numeracy is the **ability to understand and use quantitative health information**, including:

- basic calculations, and
- information in documents and non-text formats such as graphs.

Research shows that many people do not have adequate numeracy skills to look after their health.

Cancer Research UK recently found that 46% of people got the answer wrong when asked whether a risk of 1 in 100, 1 in 10, or 1 in 1000 resulted in more chance of their getting a disease (Smith et al., 2014).

They also found that those with poor numeracy skills were less likely to take a bowel cancer screening test.

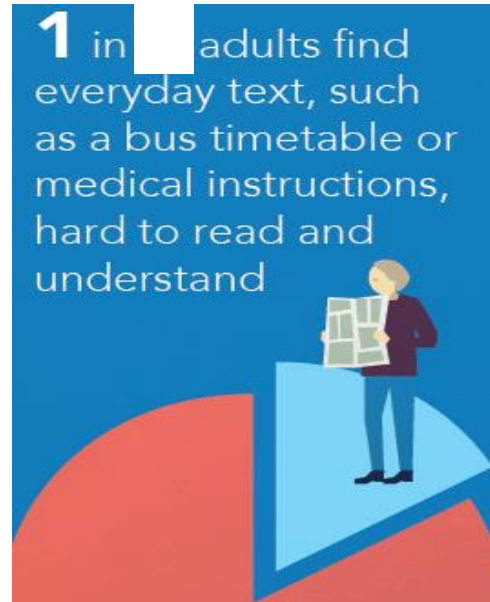
Reference: Numeracy for Health <http://bit.ly/2pzqpGJ>



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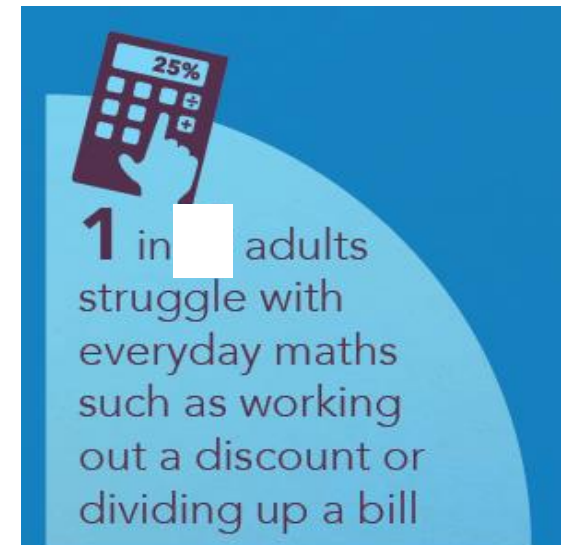
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Adult Skills Survey 2013

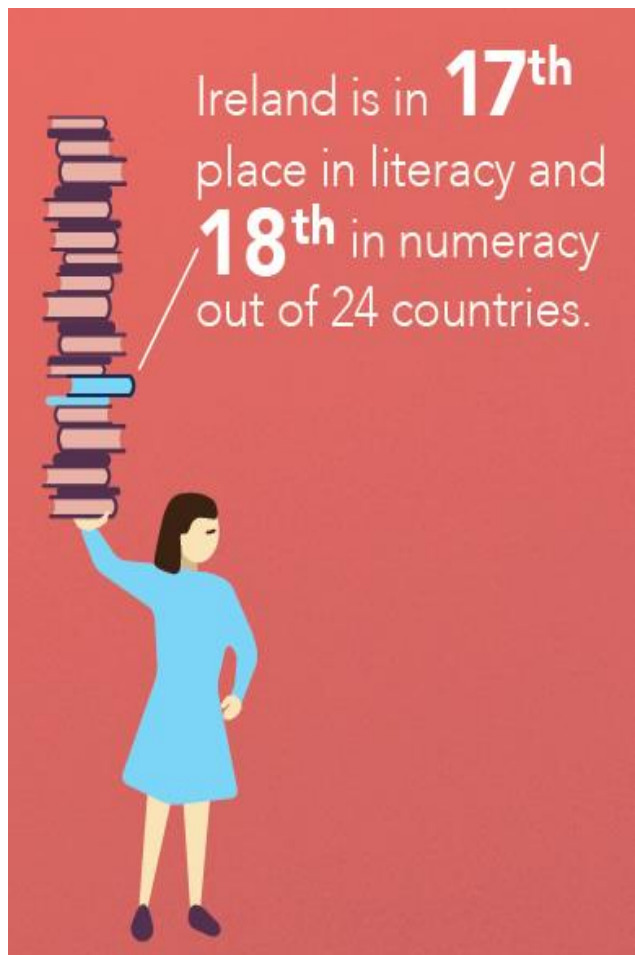


??% of Irish adults are at or below level 1 of literacy

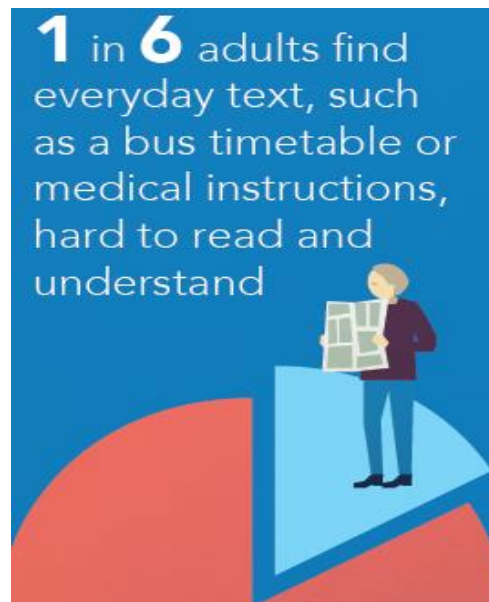
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Adult Skills Survey 2013

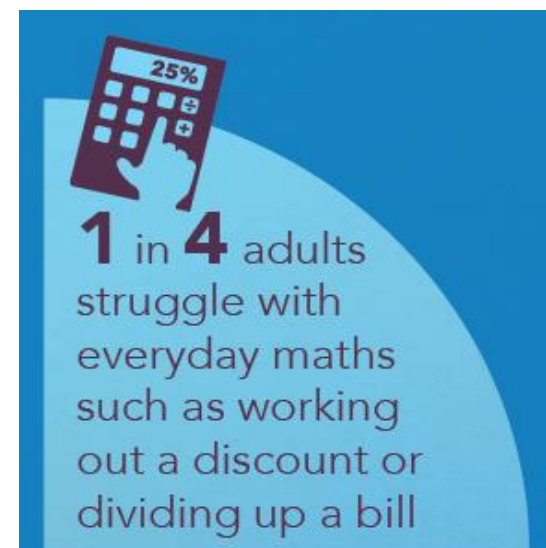


Reference: CSO (2012) Programme for Assessment of Adult Competencies
[PIAAC 2012](#) Survey Results for Ireland



18% of Irish adults are at or below level 1 of literacy – 521,550 people

25% of Irish adults are at or below level 1 of numeracy – 754,000 people



Example

How much
sugar is in
this pot of
yogurt?

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 30 g

Servings Per Container 1

Amount Per Serving

Calories 15 **Calories from Fat** 0

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 0g **0 %**

Saturated Fat 0g **0 %**

Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol 0mg **0 %**

Sodium 35mg **1 %**

Potassium 0mg **0 %**

Total Carbohydrate 2g **1 %**

Dietary Fiber 0g **0 %**

Soluble Fiber 0g

Insoluble Fiber 0g

Sugars 1g

Protein 2g

Vitamin A 0% • Vitamin C 0%

Calcium 0% • Iron 0%

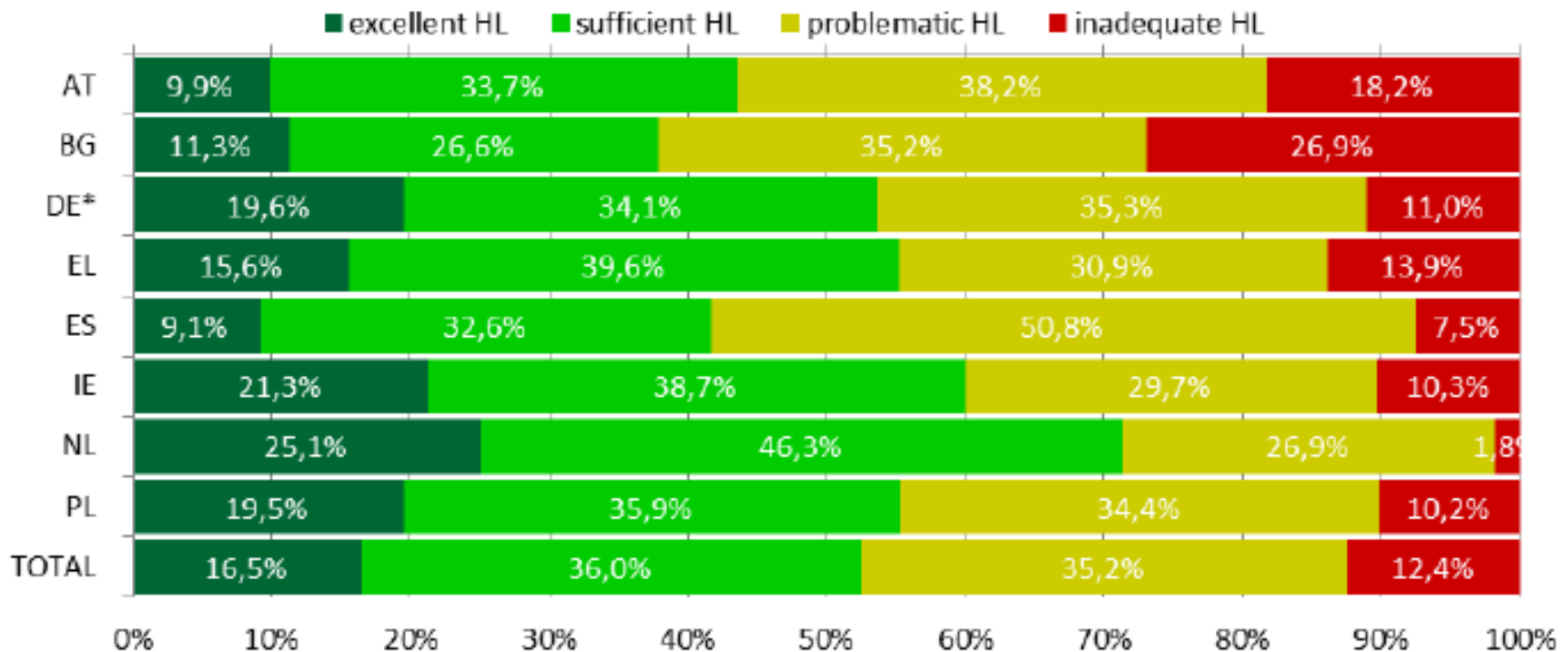
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.



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EU Health Literacy Survey



10.3% had inadequate health literacy

29.7% had problematic health literacy

Limited health literacy rate 40% (2012)



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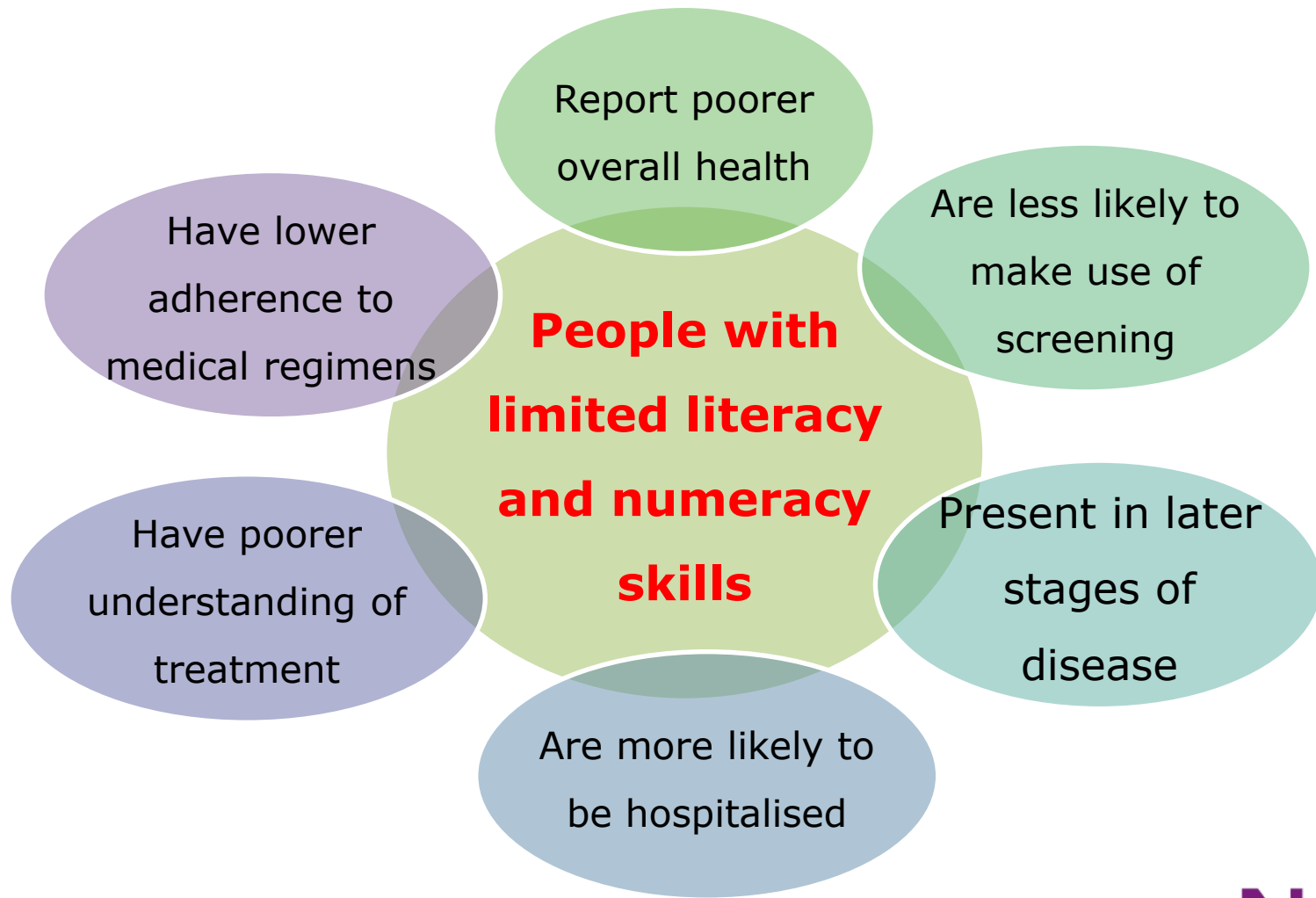
**Why is literacy
and numeracy
important?**



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It is important because ...



It is important because ...

One in five Irish people are not fully confident that they understand the information they receive from their healthcare professional (HCP).

43% of people would only sometimes ask their HCP to clarify the information if they did not understand something they had said.

17% of people have taken the wrong dose of medication at least once.

66% of people have difficulty understanding signs and directions in Irish hospitals.

Recent research found...

??% of Irish people
calling for less medical
jargon from their healthcare
professionals

People aged [] years were
least likely to ask a doctor,
nurse or pharmacist to explain
things they don't understand

[] was
ranked as the main reason for
not seeking more information
from a healthcare professional
(24%)

??% couldn't
define the term
prognosis

Recent research found...

39% of Irish people calling for less medical jargon from their healthcare professionals

People aged 15 - 34 years were **least likely to ask** a doctor, nurse or pharmacist to explain things they don't understand

Embarrassment was ranked as the main reason for not seeking more information from a healthcare professional (24%)

45% couldn't define the term prognosis

Government Commitment

Healthy Ireland - new national framework for action to improve the health and wellbeing of our country (2013 – 2025) - contains the first ever Government commitment to health literacy:

“Address and prioritise health literacy in developing future policy, educational and information interventions”



Wellbeing and Mental Health

Key Objective: to work in partnership to protect, promote and enhance individual and communities wellbeing and mental health

Action: provision of health literacy



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive



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Delivering a health literacy- friendly service



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Becoming health literacy friendly

A health literacy friendly service has policies, procedures and practices that ensure basic skills are accounted for in everything that it does.

NALA supports organisations to follow a five-step process to become more health literacy friendly.



A literacy audit is a snapshot of a service and how it addresses literacy issues in policies and procedures, communications and staff training and development. It looks at:





- What you already do to support people who have literacy and numeracy difficulties; and
- What you could do better to support them.



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Literacy-friendly quality standards

	Policies and procedures
1	We have a literacy-friendly policy.
2	We have specific ways to help people find and use important information and instructions.
3	We support our staff to improve their literacy, numeracy and digital skills.
	Communications
4	Our staff use plain English when speaking with people.
5	We use plain English in our written information .
6	We check that people understand what we have told them.
7	The layout of our office/reception/service is clear.
	Staff awareness and responding sensitively
8	Our staff are aware of literacy friendly work practices.
9	Our staff respond sensitively to the literacy and numeracy needs of people.
	Evaluating and improving
10	We regularly evaluate and continually improve our literacy friendly service.

The Crystal Clear Mark 2015-19

National programme offering pharmacies the opportunity to gain a unique quality mark. This **Crystal Clear Mark** recognises pharmacies and general practices that deliver a health literacy friendly service to their patients.

You must show that you comply with nine quality standards by completing an online audit tool. The standards and questions look at policies and procedures; communications, staff training and awareness and evaluating and improving.

It was developed by The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU), MSD and NALA.



Online Audit Tool

www.nala.ie/crystalclear



**Communicating
more effectively**



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Watching your language

Instead of	Consider
Administer	Give
Benign	Harmless
Dosage	How to take
Hypertension	High blood pressure
Malignant	Harmful



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Watching your language

Instead of	Consider
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USE PLAIN ENGLISH IN PRACTICE

- USE ALL CAPITALS. THEY MAKE THINGS EASIER TO READ
 - TIGHT LINE SPACING
 - ALIGN TO THE CENTRE
 - FOR EMPHASIS: USE *ITALICS* OR UNDERLINE –
 - USE A CLEAR FONT SUCH AS TIMES NEW ROMAN
 - ALWAYS USE SHORT VERSIONS TO SAVE TIME E.G. NALA, IPHA?
 - THE ACTIVE VOICE IS TO BE USED AT ALL TIMES
 - FONT SIZE DOESN'T MATTER



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Use plain English in practice

- DON'T USE ALL CAPITALS, lower case is easier to read.
- Line spacing of 1.5
- Align to the left
- For emphasis: no *italics* or underline – use **bold**
- Sans serif font such as Arial, not Times New Roman
- Font size 12 ideally, 11 if you want to fit it on 1 page
- Define acronyms – what is NALA, IPHA?
- We advise you use the active voice. The passive is forbidden.

General tips for using plain English

1. Think of whom you are writing to and why.
2. Be personal and direct.
3. Keep it simple and define any essential jargon and abbreviations.
4. Use a clear font such as Arial or Verdana and use 12 point.
5. Keep sentences to an average of 15 to 20 words.
6. Use signposts – for example, table of contents, headings and bulleted lists



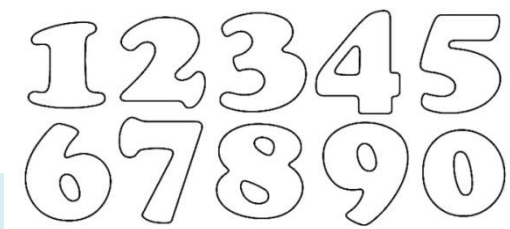
NALA website on Plain English www.simplyput.ie



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Plain Numbers



Plain numbers is about presenting numerical information so we readily understand it.

Top tips

- Confirm which measurement system you use.
- Show, don't tell – for example: Point to and mark 2.5 ml on a syringe.
- Present numbers in context – for example: A baby at 15 weeks is 4 inches long and weighs in at about 21/2 ounces – about the size of an apple
- Use tables over graphs or charts.
- Leave a full space between a digit and the symbol if the symbol is a letter. For example, 25 m, 400 g.



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More suggestions here: <http://bit.ly/2axBQd3>

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Food labels: Do and Don't

Do	Don't
Use lower case letters	Use capitals
Use a readable typeface, sans serif fonts like Arial or Tahoma are best	Use serif font such as Times New Roman
Use minimum of size 11 font, ideally size 12	Use 10 point or lower
Use bigger or bold for emphasis	Use underline or italicise
Be specific	Be vague
Use active voice – Take 2 tablets	Use passive voice – One tablet twice a day
Use numerals instead of words	Use words for numbers – 2 is better than TWO
Use everyday words	Use jargon or abbreviations
Align text to the left	Centre the text
Add the purpose of the label	Leave off the purpose of the label

Questions



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Conclusion

Health literacy is an essential skill for life that we develop and maintain throughout our lives

It is not an individual problem – range of responses required, from personal to practice to policy

Becoming health literacy aware means better health services

Ask that question



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Further information

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nalairland

Family: www.helpmykidlearn.ie



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Health literacy videos



**Patient
view from
Martina**

<http://bit.ly/2tEmnhy>



**Health
practitioner
view from
Kathleen**

<http://bit.ly/2shDCre>



Ask me 3

<http://bit.ly/2mVXFdV>



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Health Literacy Tools and Resources

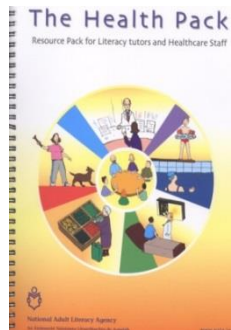
HSE Guidelines for Communicating Clearly

<http://bit.ly/2BMja85>

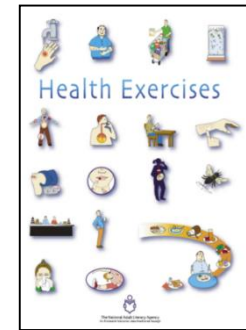


Writing and Design Tips

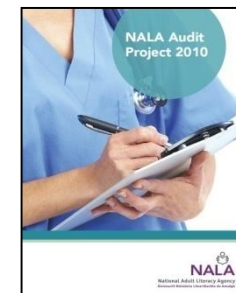
<http://bit.ly/1ehZ1ns>



- Health Pack <http://bit.ly/18DtwMz>
- Health Exercises <http://bit.ly/1mQZ9uM>



- Health Literacy Audit <http://bit.ly/16ieLxJ>
- Report of pilot in 4 sites <http://bit.ly/1qR2NO9>



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