

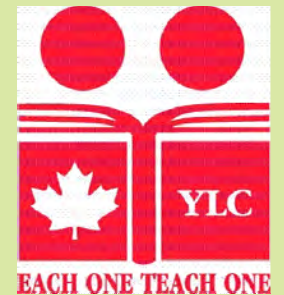
Did you know?



*Literacy is
the best remedy
for a better life.*

Health Literacy

prepared by
Yamaska Literacy Council
www.yamaskaliteracy.ca





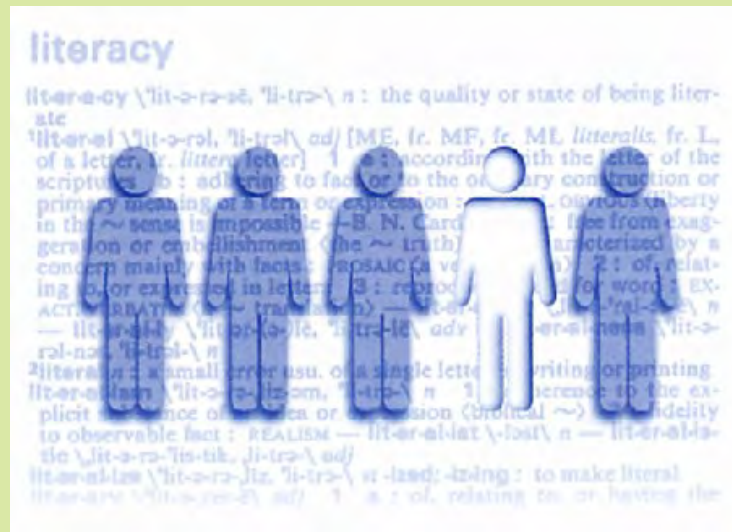
Is HEALTH LITERACY another bandwagon?



- Environmental literacy
- Financial literacy
- Computer literacy



First we must understand LITERACY.



➤ **What is Literacy?**



A definition of literacy:

The ability to use printed and written information in society – to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential.

Key points:

- The term **low literacy skills** is now used to represent almost 9 million adult Canadians who have serious problems with reading, writing and math. 4 out of 10 Canadians have less than adequate literacy skills.
- Living in an “information culture” requires higher levels of literacy than at any previous time in human history.

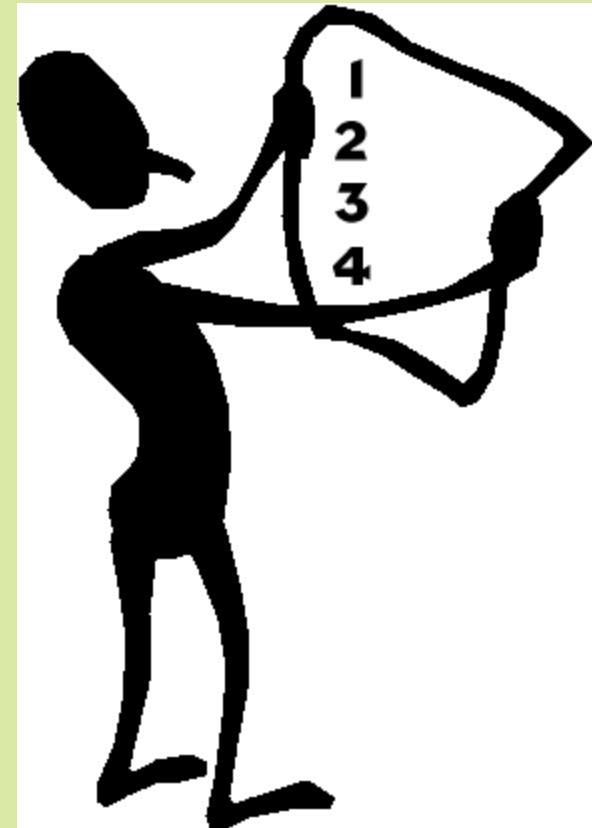


Adult Literacy and Life Skills (ALL) survey, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, Human Resources Development Canada and Statistics, 2005.



Four skill domains were measured

- Prose Literacy
- Document Literacy
- Numeracy
- Problem-solving skills





Five Levels of Literacy

The International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) identifies 5 levels of literacy:

- **LEVEL 1** – adults have few decoding skills
- **LEVEL 2** - adults' skills are limited to simple printed material
- **LEVEL 3** – adults are average readers
- **LEVELS 4 & 5** – adults have strong literacy skills



Canadian Statistics



- 23,000 Canadians aged 16-65 were surveyed in 2003
- **LEVELS 1 & 2** are the lowest levels (42% of total)
- **LEVEL 3** is deemed “adequate” for today’s information society (38% of total)
- **LEVELS 4 & 5** represent high literacy skills (20% of total)





Quebec Statistics



- 800 000 adults aged 16-65 in Quebec are at **LEVEL 1** (16% of the population)
- 1 700 000 adults aged 16-65 in Quebec are at **LEVEL 2** (33% of the population)
- 2 500 000 adults aged 16-65 in Quebec are at **LEVELS 1 & 2** (49% of the population)



Quebec compared to the rest of Canada



- Quebec's scores are inferior to the rest of Canada in prose and document literacy but do not differ significantly for numeracy
- Proportion of adults at **LEVELS 1 & 2**
 - 49% compared to 42% for prose literacy
 - 51% compared to 43% for document literacy
 - 53% compared to 50% for numeracy



Disturbing Statistics

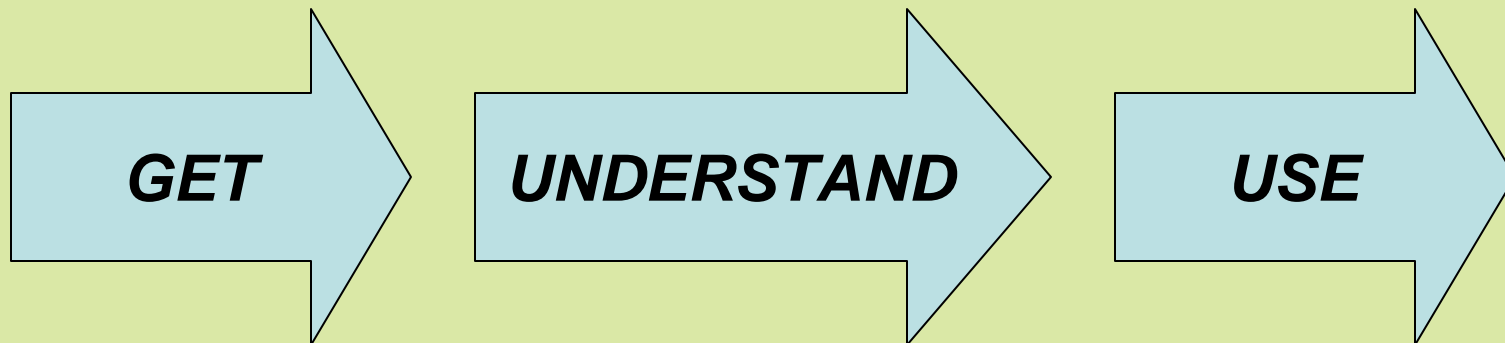
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4/5
Canada	22%	26%	33%	20%
Quebec	28%	31%	25%	16%
Brome- Missisquoi	34%	31%	29%	5%



What is HEALTH LITERACY?

The Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA) defines health literacy as:

Skills to enable access, understanding and use of information for health.



CPHA: www.cpha.ca



What is HEALTH LITERACY?

Health literacy impacts on our ability to:

- Make healthy lifestyle choices (nutrition labels)
- Find & understand health & safety information
- Locate appropriate health services
- Communicate with health providers (i.e. sharing personal information about health history & symptoms)
- Navigate a complex health care system - from walking hospital corridors to filling out insurance forms



Examples of HEALTH LITERACY

1. Listening to news about a health topic
2. Looking for health information on-line
3. Selecting over-the-counter medications





What is the difference between **LITERACY & HEALTH LITERACY?**

Mastering health literacy tasks requires the use of more than one literacy skill – prose, document and numeracy – often simultaneously.

- requires critical thinking skills
- Involves specialized vocabulary



Understanding Health Information

Everyone has difficulty understanding health information at some time.

- Unfamiliar or technical language
- Patient anxiety
- Amount of information

People with limited literacy skills face greater challenges.



How are Canadians faring?

The majority of adult Canadians (60%) do not have the necessary skills to manage their health adequately.

The report, *Health Literacy in Canada: a Healthy Understanding*, examines the relationship between levels of health literacy and health outcomes (i.e. diabetes). It also outlines factors such as how education can effect health literacy.



Key findings of the research

- Daily reading is the strongest factor in predicting higher levels of health literacy.
- The simple act of reading every day is associated with improved health-literacy scores: 38% higher for those aged 16-65, and 52% higher for those of 66 years, and older.
- Canadians with the lowest health-literacy skills are 2.5 times more likely to report being in fair or poor health as those with the highest skill levels, even after correcting for factors such as age, education and gender.



Key findings of the research

- The prevalence of diabetes increases significantly as health literacy decreases. A similar relationship, although not as strong, is found for high blood pressure.
- Health literacy is more complex than general literacy. Mastering health-literacy tasks requires the use of more than one literacy skill – prose, document and numeracy – often simultaneously.
- In terms of health literacy, the three most vulnerable populations are seniors, immigrants and the unemployed.



Why are seniors vulnerable?

Up to 88% of people over the age of 65 cannot cope on their own with modern health information demands.

- Education levels were not as high in the past as they are today
- Cognitive function usually declines with age
- By age 65, 85% of women and 77% of men also have at least one chronic health condition
- Demographic projections indicate seniors will make up an increasing proportion of our population in the future.



Readability

Influenza A(H1N1) – Appeal to sense of responsible citizenship —October 31, 2009

Given the rush for the vaccine, Minister of Health and Social Services Dr. Yves Bolduc is appealing to Quebeckers' sense of responsible citizenship, pointing out that there are enough vaccines for everyone and that it is essential to apply the vaccination sequence established by public health authorities to ensure optimal protection for those people who run the greatest risk of developing complications and requiring intensive care if they catch the virus. Flu clinics might open progressively, if need be, in some regions to assess, treat and direct people with flu symptoms.

Source: <http://www.pandemiequebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/index.aspx@ sujet=143.html>

- *What is the reading level required in this passage?*
- **Flesch-Kincaide Grade Level - 16.6**



Test your HEALTH LITERACY

Can you correctly answer the example question?



AMA Health Literacy Video

www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgTuD7I7LG8





What can be done?

According to CPHA's Expert Panel on health literacy a 2-pronged approach is needed.

- Increase health literacy skills* 
- Make health systems more sensitive and responsive to issues of literacy



* How can YLC help?

- Provide one-on-one literacy tutoring to adults
- Offer scribe service
- Promote awareness of health literacy
- Develop and promote plain language tools to help citizens with health literacy information
 - Tracking your health
 - Preparing to visit a healthcare provider
 - Websites & resources



Health Literacy Resources

- <http://www.cpha.ca/en/portals/h-l/faqs.aspx>
- <http://videos.med.wisc.edu/videoInfo.php?videoid=3496>
- [Health Literacy in Canada: A Healthy Understanding](#)
This report examines the relationship between levels of health literacy and health outcomes (e.g., diabetes). It also outlines how certain characteristics, such as education and age, can affect health literacy. (February 2008)
<http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/HealthLiteracy/>
- [Health Literacy in Canada: Initial Results from the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey \(IALSS\)](#)
The results used in this report are derived from health-related literacy tasks that were included in the 2003 International Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (IALSS). (September 2007)
<http://www.ccl-cca.ca/ccl/Reports/HealthLiteracy/HealthLiteracy2007.html>



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