



## Fact Sheet

### Improving Your Health Literacy

Health care information and the health care system can be confusing. Nine out of every 10 adults have “low health literacy”, meaning they have trouble understanding or remembering the instructions their doctor gives them. Even highly educated adults can have low literacy, especially when stressed or ill.

To improve your health literacy, and your health, here are some suggestions:

**Choose a primary care provider** you are comfortable communicating with. You and your provider should become partners in your health care. **Share information** with him. He should know all about you, including your beliefs, your health concerns, and your medical history. He should be aware of any medications you are taking, and any complementary or alternative health practices you are using. Your provider needs to have a full picture of your health, then you can work together to make medical decisions about your health.

**Prepare for each visit.** Before you go to the doctor, think about what you want to discuss. Write down your symptoms. List any questions you have, putting the most important ones at the top of the list so you’ll be sure to ask them first. Take all your medications with you.

During your visit, **ask questions** about the medical tests your provider recommends, her diagnosis, and treatment instructions. Speak up if you have concerns. Ask her about other options. Make sure you completely understand your provider’s instructions by repeating them back to her.

Ask your provider to **write down instructions** for you, or provide you with printed material about your condition or diagnosis. You can review this material later at your own pace.

Be an active participant in your own health care. Learn more by visiting [www.phelpscountyhealth.com](http://www.phelpscountyhealth.com), Facebook, Twitter, or by calling (573) 458-6010.

The Phelps/Maries County Health Department – caring for your family, caring for our community, caring for YOU!



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