

# HEALTH LITERACY: A KEY TO UNDERSTANDING AND USING HEALTH INFORMATION



Tips for Families from the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness

## Understanding What Your Doctor Tells You

Health literacy is how well you understand health information and make good choices about health and medical care.

### Why Is It Important?

Many people find it hard to understand the health information they need to take care of themselves and their families.

### When Parents and Caregivers Understand Health Information and How to Use it, Children Are More Likely to:

- Miss fewer days of school
- Make fewer trips to the pediatrician or the emergency room that are not needed

- Live healthier lives
- Get preventive care like flu shots
- Have a safe home where fewer accidents happen

### Learning Ways to Understand and Use Health Information Can Help With:

- Talking with your doctor
- Asking questions
- Following a doctor's directions
- Taking or giving medicine the right way
- Getting needed medical tests and care
- Knowing what to do when your child gets sick
- Preventing diseases like diabetes, asthma, cancer
- Making healthy choices for you and your family
- Asking for help

## Things You Can Do to Help Your Child

- ASK for help if you do not understand a health form or do not know how to fill it out.
- ASK for handouts in the language that is easiest for you to read.
- WRITE DOWN questions you have before you go on any health care visit.
- TELL YOUR DOCTOR if you do not understand what he or she is saying.
- Go to the library and ask how to find accurate information about your health concerns and medicines.
- Ask your Head Start or child care program for information on health issues that concern you.
- Go to health workshops at your child's Head Start program and in your community.

