

Health literacy: drawing on the skills of library and knowledge services

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Developing people

for health and

healthcare

Health literacy

“Health literacy refers to the **personal characteristics** and **social resources** needed for individuals and communities to access, understand, appraise and use information services to make decisions about health”

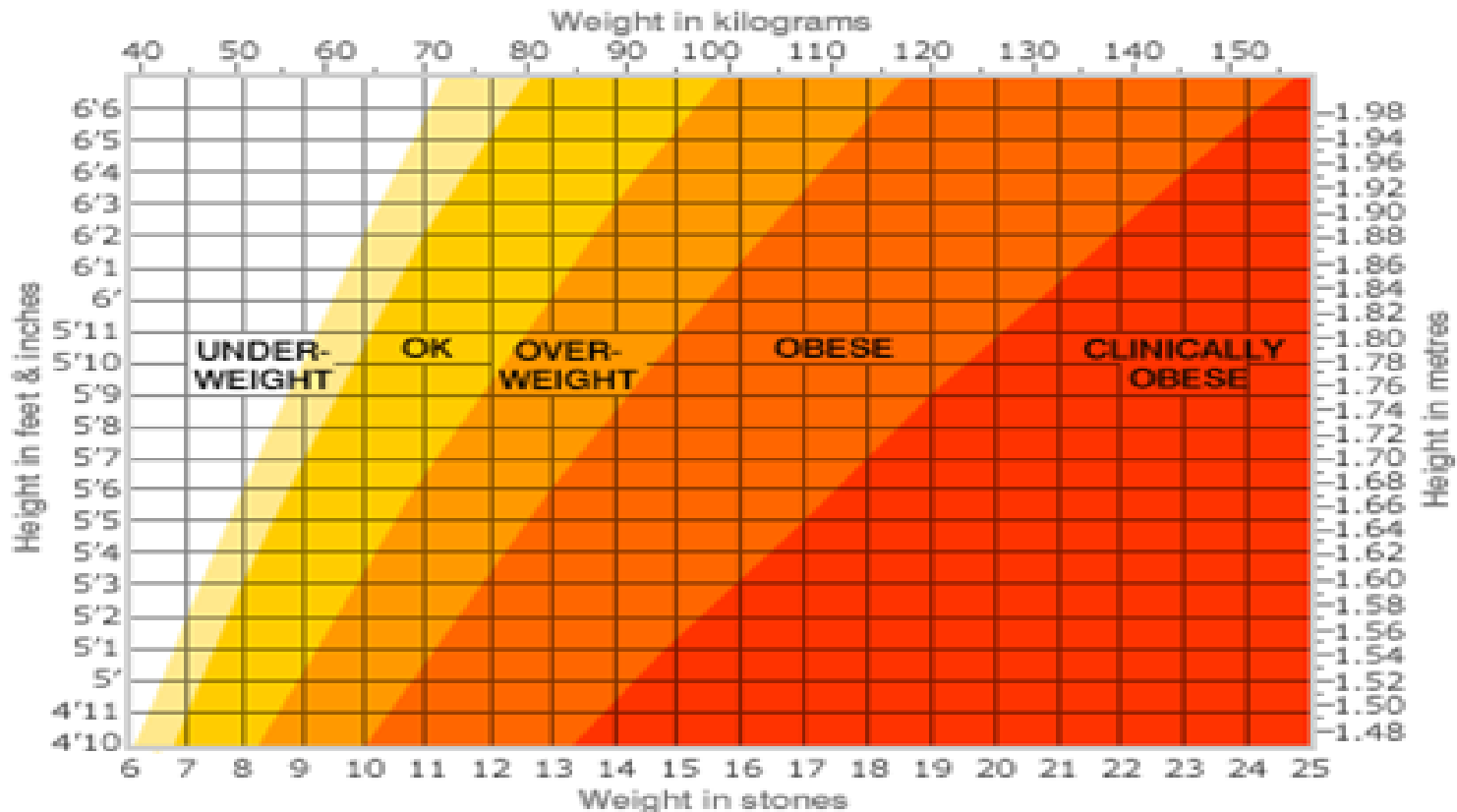
World Health Organization

Why is it an issue?

- 43% adults do not understand textual health information
- 61% adults do not understand health information that combines text with numeracy skills

What impact misunderstanding?

BODY MASS INDEX



Types of health literacy

- **Functional** – obtain and apply information
- **Interactive** – extract relevant information and apply to changing circumstances
- **Critical** – analyse and gain control



Patient and Public Information

Health literacy

- Raising skills and awareness of the frontline workforce
- Develop and share skills
- Provide access to resources

Example: spoken communication

Using 'teach back'



I would like to check that I have explained things properly, would you mind telling me what it is we have discussed and what we have agreed you will do?



Can you tell me how you are going to explain things to your family when you get home tonight?



I want to make sure you have understood, can you tell me what I've asked you to do?



Have you understood everything we have discussed?

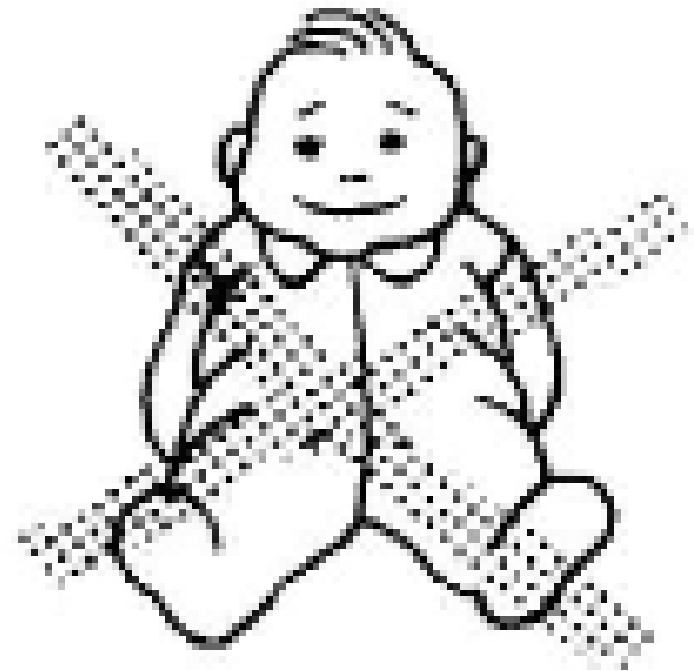
Example: written communication

- Keep sentences short, using lists where appropriate
- Use active verbs
- Avoid writing in the third person
- Use words that are appropriate for the reader



Example: use of images

- Pictures should support the meaning of the words
- Pictures must be easy to understand
- Pictures can be drawings, photographs or other images
- Make pictures as big as possible



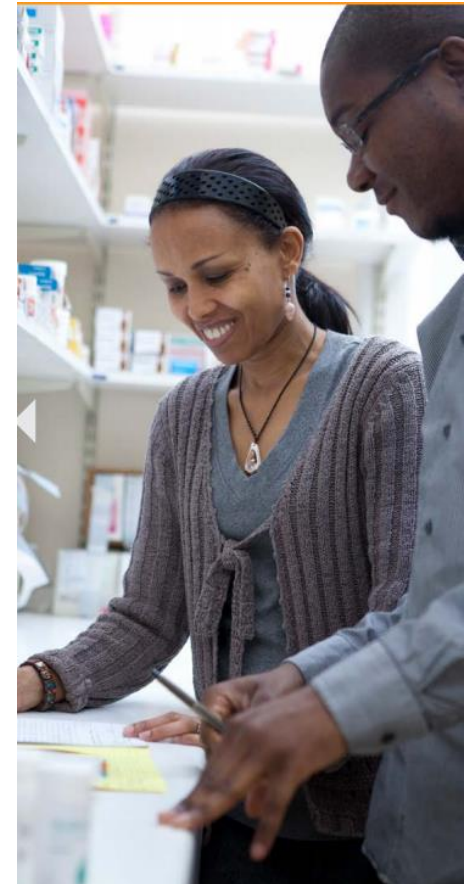
Resource: Health Literacy Toolkit

<https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/health-literacy>

[or search for “HEE health literacy toolkit”]

Using “How to” Guide

- Evidence on health literacy
- Links to resources
- Links to tools
- Guidance on when tools are applicable
- Tips on how to make the best use of tools and resources



What role health librarians?

