

Promoting Nutrition Literacy in Primary Care

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Nutrition literacy refers to the ability to understand how food choices affect health, interpret nutrition labels to make healthier decisions, and apply that knowledge to make informed dietary choices.¹ It is a vital component of health literacy and is especially important because six of the ten leading causes of death in the U.S. can be prevented by maintaining a healthy diet.² However, nearly half of all U.S. adults struggle to understand and use common health information.³

Primary care teams can play a key role in educating patients about the positive impact of healthy food and lifestyle choices on overall health and the prevention of chronic illnesses. The following resources can help identify patients with low health and/or nutrition literacy and provide guidance for patient interactions.



Health Literacy Screening Tools and Resources

- **Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine (REALM-SF):** A brief, seven-word test that checks health literacy by assessing a patient's ability to pronounce health-related terms.
- **Newest Vital Sign (NVS):** A quick 3-5 minute oral screening tool designed to identify individuals with limited health literacy skills.
- **Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit:** Developed by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, this toolkit helps simplify information, confirm patient understanding, and make health systems easier to navigate.
- **Health Literacy Tool Shed:** A collection of assessment tools, funded by the National Institute of Health's National Library of Medicine, including disease-specific measures such as the Diabetes Numeracy Test, which evaluates numeracy skills like interpreting the Nutrition Facts Panel label.

For more information, access Cardi-OH's expanded resources on [health literacy](#) and [nutrition literacy](#).

References

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