**Health Literacy and Treatment Adherence**

A 2017 meta analysis looked at 220 studies of health literacy and treatment adherence and found:

* A “highly significant” correlation between **health literacy** and patient **adherence.**
* A “**14% higher risk** of nonadherence among patients who have lower health literacy than among patients with higher health literacy”3

**How does health literacy affect medication adherence?**

Limited health literacy can affect a person’s ability to:

* Identify **medications**
* Interpret **dosing**
* Take medications correctly
* Understand drug **labels**2

In addition to these direct effects, research has suggested that those with low health literacy had increased **fear** about side effects, which can decrease adherence1

**What to do?**

Suggestions to address treatment adherence related to health literacy include:

* Using language that patients can understand3
* Using **teach back**1,3
* Limiting the amount of information provided1
* **Reinforcing** messaging over time3
* Providing materials for **future reference**1



References:

1. Soones, T., Lin, J., Wolf, M., O’Conor, M., Martynenko, M., Wisnivesky, J. & Federman, A. (2017). Pathways Linking Health Literacy, Health Beliefs, and Cognition to Medication Adherence in Older Adults with Asthma, 139(3), 804-809.
2. Hersh, L., Salzman, B., Snyderman, D. (2015). Health Literacy in Primary Care Practice, American Family Physician, 92(2), 119-124.
3. Miller, T. (2017). Health Literacy and Adherence to Medical Treatment in Chronic and Acute Illness: A Meta-Analysis. Patient Education and Counseling, 99(7), 1079-1086.
4. U.S. Food and Drug Administration (2016). Why You Need to Take Your Medications as Prescribed or Instructed. Retrieved from [URL to Source](https://www.fda.gov/drugs/special-features/why-you-need-take-your-medications-prescribed-or-instructed)
5. Ferdinand, K., Senatore, F., Clayton-Jeter, H., Cryer, D., Lewin, J., Nasser, S…Califf, R. (2017). Improving Medication Adherence in Cardiometabolic Disease: Practical and Regulatory Implications. Journal of the American College of Cardiology, 69(4), 437-451.