

Health Literacy: A Pivotal Part of a Healthier Future



Health literacy implies the achievement of a level of knowledge, personal skills and confidence to take action to improve personal and community health by changing personal lifestyles and living conditions. In this manner, at the heart of health literacy, lies the purpose of empowering individuals to take charge of their well-being.

Health literacy has a crucial effect on general health and well being, and is central to healthcare today, where health literacy impacts every life. More knowledge ensures that this impact is positive and significant. Owing to this, health literacy influences overall health outcomes for communities and countries, and it also plays a role in determining the demands placed on healthcare systems.

The evident influence of health literacy makes it essential for everyone, regardless of their health status, age, education or income. As a country, it is important to enable communities to achieve a high level of health literacy, as people with a higher health literacy are more likely to:

- Understand their own health: This can enable a clear understanding of health statuses and conditions, and play an instrumental role in encouraging health seeking behaviours, treatment adherence and long-term treatment management.
- Better manage their health: With more information, it is likely that individuals will be more inclined to undergo regular medical tests and screenings, while also proactively ensuring that they stay up to date with vital medications such as vaccinations

- Make informed decisions: Good health literacy coupled with reliable information from a healthcare provider can encourage better decision making to ensure that people remain in good health.

On the contrary, lower health literacy rates can give rise to a variety of issues that lead to increased use of healthcare services and subsequently higher healthcare costs and poor health outcomes. Low health literacy can also lead to difficulty in navigating the healthcare system which can lead to reduced satisfaction with healthcare services. Patients who are unable to successfully interpret health information have increased hospitalization rates, develop more diseases, and experience higher mortality.

Health is a primary theme across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with the third Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) being entirely focused on good health and well being. This makes the improvement of health literacy imperative, for the well being of individuals and for the achievement of the SDGs. To improve health literacy, the concerned [SDG](#) suggests that individuals raise awareness in their communities, about the importance of good health, healthy lifestyles and the right to quality health services, especially for those who are the most vulnerable, such as women and children. In addition to this, it is also important that individuals ask healthcare providers questions to aid their understanding of their own health and therefore enable better decision making.

According to [Health Literacy and SDGs](#), effective health literacy goes beyond individual literacy, and is concerned with establishing health-literate systems that make being healthy the obvious choice. When communities are equipped with the knowledge they need to effectively manage their health, they thrive and collectively foster a culture of prevention over treatment. In this manner, working towards prioritising health literacy can set the country on a transformative growth trajectory where communities are healthier and happier, and health environments are safer.

Sattva has been working with various non-profits and social organisations as well as corporate clients to help them define their social impact goals. Our focus is to solve critical problems and find scalable solutions. We assist organisations in formulating their long-term impact strategy by aligning with business objectives and providing meaningful solutions to social issues.

If you have any such stories or ideas to share, please write to us: impact@sattva.co.in