



**NEXTpert
Highlight**

Ron Brooks, MD, FACP

Insights on

Health Literacy



What is the biggest misconception about health literacy?

“The biggest misconception is that it’s not an issue. In fact, low literacy has a significant impact when needed to understand and follow health guidance.

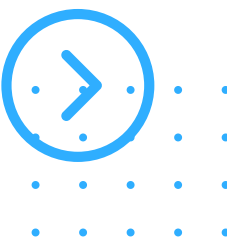
Low health literacy affects not only the individual but the entire family. Inadequate health literacy more strongly predicts health status than income, race, age, or education.”





Why should health literacy matter to employers?

- 30 percent of Americans read below a fifth-grade level
- Morbidity and mortality associated with poor medication adherence costs \$528.4 billion annually
- Nonadherence to prescribed treatment is thought to cause at least 100,000 preventable deaths and \$100 billion in preventable medical costs per year
- 20–30% of prescriptions are never filled
- 50% of prescriptions are not taken as prescribed



What is HealthNEXT's approach to promoting health literacy among employees in the workplace?

“HealthNEXT research has found that in building a culture of health and well-being, best-in-class organizations follow ten best-practice pillars. HealthNEXT addresses the issue of health literacy as part of its Pillar 7 – Marketing and Communications. This pillar recognizes the importance of ensuring employees have the knowledge and skills to access, understand, and use health information to make informed decisions about their health.

Few Americans can clearly understand common health benefit terms, and too often, we see healthcare literature written at grade levels too high for the average reader. We recommend that employers distribute healthcare material written no higher than a 5th-grade reading level to ensure that it is accessible and understandable to a wide audience.”





Three themes HealthNEXT addresses with employers regarding health literacy

1

Literacy and Communication: HealthNEXT emphasizes the importance of communicating health information no higher than a 5th-grade reading level and can suggest tools and resources to support this effort.

2

Self-Care: The company aims to ensure that employees are health literate about what it takes to take care of themselves, recognizing that this is a fundamental aspect of promoting health and well-being in the workplace.

3

Understanding Health Benefits: HealthNEXT works with employers to help employees understand their health benefits, including complex terms such as out-of-pocket deductible, premium, and coinsurance, as research shows that only a small percentage of the population can adequately define these terms.



How can employers assess the health literacy needs of their workforce, and what resources are available to help them do so?

“Employers can assess the health literacy needs of their workforce by evaluating employee chronic disease medication compliance, as low compliance may indicate potential health literacy concerns.

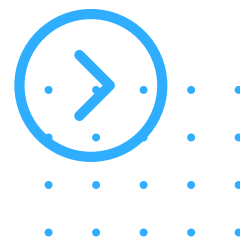
Additionally, valuable resources for this assessment can be provided through organizations such as HealthNEXT, The CDC, and The National Library of Medicine.”





How can employers effectively communicate health information to employees with varying levels of health literacy?

“Employers should employ multiple communication methods, including print materials that adhere to national plain language recommendations, audio formats, and visual communications.”



Employers can also:



Provide interactive workshops and training sessions here employees can engage in discussions, ask questions, and receive personalized guidance



Utilize digital platforms to accommodate employees who prefer online resources



Leverage culturally tailored communications to recognize and address cultural differences within the workforce



Facilitate access to health professionals within the workplace or through partnerships with healthcare providers, allowing employees to seek clarification and advice



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