**Ten answers about health literacy**

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| 1. | Years of schooling are a good estimate of a person’s health literacy.***Statistically this is true but in everyday practice may not be the case as everyone will have low health literacy at some stage in their lives when they, or a family member, are diagnosed with a new health condition or disability.*** |
| 2. | In general, people will tell you if they can or cannot read.***People who have English as a second language may do but most New Zealanders won’t because they think they are coping with what they have to read.*** |
| 3. | Low health literacy is a cause for shame for people.***If they are aware of it, they can feel ashamed. There is US research that confirms this.*** |
| 4. | Family members often accompany patients with low health literacy during appointments with health professionals.***They may do – they may not. This is not a reliable sign that people have low health literacy. Some cultures are more likely to bring family members.*** |
| 5. | People with low health literacy can be found in all parts of the population.***True, both statistically and in everyday practice.***  |
| 6. | People with high income levels do not have low health literacy.***Employment is an indicator of higher health literacy skills but in practice this is not always the case - see answer for question 1.*** |
| 7. | Patients with low health literacy usually take their medicines.***There is a lot of research to show this is not the case. Not taking medicines doesn’t just apply to people with low health literacy. However, there is also a lot of US research with patients with low health literacy which shows they don’t understand their medicine and therefore don’t take them correctly.*** |
| 8. | Patients with low health literacy have worse health outcomes than patients with better health literacy. ***There is a lot of US research that confirms this.***  |
| 9. | Most New Zealanders with low levels of health literacy are unemployed.***In fact, on a population basis, most New Zealanders with low health literacy are employed.*** |
| 10. | Women are more likely to have low health literacy than men.***Statistically women have better health literacy. However they have poorer numeracy (maths) skills than men. Maths skills are really important when taking medicines.***  |