

Practical Tips for People with Hearing Loss during Healthcare Visits

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Introduction

Key Idea

Health literacy isn't just about understanding—it depends on whether information is communicated in a way you can fully access.

If something is hard to understand, it may be a communication mismatch—not a personal failure.

Health Literacy is a Two-Way Street

- **You:** Ask questions, clarify, stay engaged
- **Healthcare systems:** Provide clear, accessible communication

Hearing Loss & Health Literacy

- Hearing loss itself isn't the barrier. Challenges often arise when communication is not accessible, not visual or written when needed, or too fast, complex, or unclear.
- It's about the total communication experience.
- You can't be expected to understand information you can't fully access. Good healthcare communication should work for you.

Your Visit

Before Your Visit

1. Request communication support ahead of time (captions, interpreter, assistive devices)
2. Write down your top 2–3 questions
3. Bring medications, photos, or test results
4. Tell staff your communication preferences

During Your Visit

1. Sit where you can see and hear clearly
2. Ask for written notes or visual explanations
3. "Can you write that down for me?"
4. "What are the 2 most important next steps?"
5. "Let me repeat that back to make sure I understand."

After Your Visit

1. Review your notes or visit summary
2. Use your patient portal
3. Follow up if anything is unclear
4. Don't hesitate to ask again—clarity matters

Additional Strategies

1. Bring a trusted person (another set of eyes/ears)
2. Use assistive technology when available
3. Ask about clear masks or visual access options
4. Connect with hearing loss organizations for support