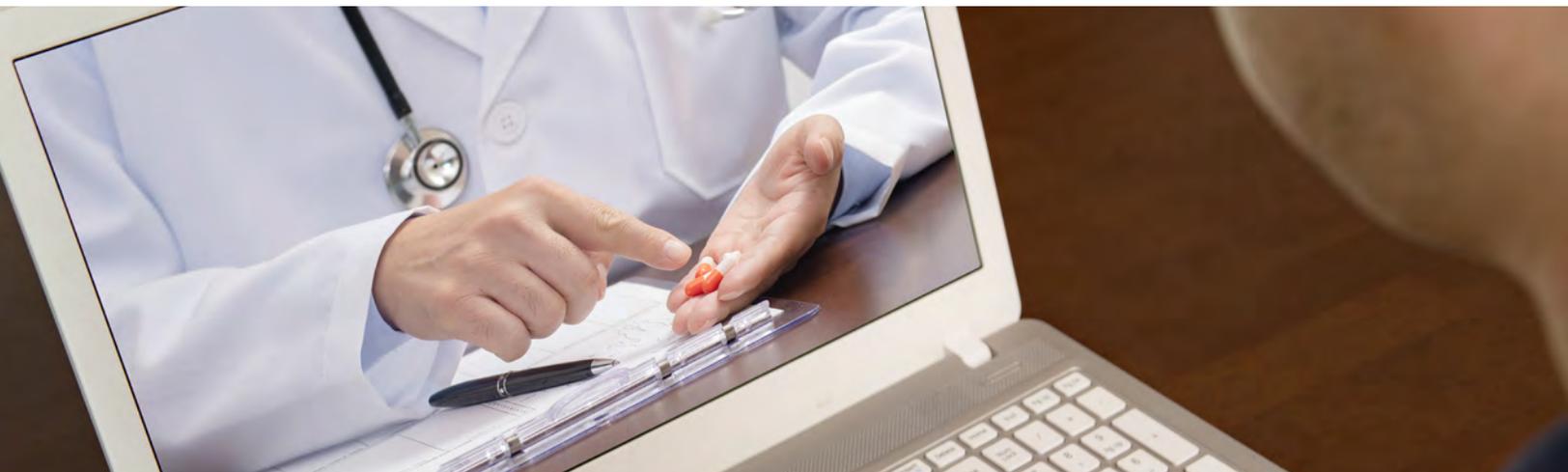


TIP SHEET

WHAT MATTERS

Digital Communications for Older Adults





The Basics:

Digital communication means providing and receiving information using digital sources, such as websites, blogs, emails, text messages, and video conferences.

Computers, tablet devices, smartphones, and landline phones are commonly used for digital communication.

Health literacy refers to the ability to find and understand information about health.

Low health literacy may result in a person misunderstanding medical information and medication instructions.

Before Digital Communication:

Make sure that you know the purpose of this communication.

Ask the older adult “how confident are you filling out medical forms by yourself?” with the options of [Extremely], [Quite a bit], [Somewhat], [A little bit] and [Not at all].

1. If the person answers [A little bit] or [Not at all], communications should be at the 5th to 6th grade reading level.
2. If the person answers [Quite a bit] or [Somewhat], communications should be at the 8th to 9th grade reading level.
3. If the person answers [Extremely], communications should be at the 10th grade reading level.

Check the reading level of your messages here:
<https://readabilityformulas.com/free-readability-formula-tests.php>

Offer to help older adults adjust their device settings, including at least a 12-point font size, preferred sound volume, and comfortable screen brightness.

WHAT MATTERS

Digital Communication for Older Adults

TIP
SHEET

During Digital Communication:

- Focus only on 1 to 3 important messages at a time.
- Describe and explain your message in 2 to 3 different ways.
- Give information in multiple modes – orally, in writing, using visual aids, through video, etc.
- Use video-conferencing applications instead of long text messages or emails in case of low health literacy.

After Digital Communication:

- Recommend reliable health websites such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), etc.
- Have older adults ask their health care providers if they have questions about any of the information communicated digitally.
- Remind older adults not to completely rely on online health information because it varies in quality.

