



Workbook 1

Take Charge of Your Health



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abbvie

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Welcome to *ABC Health Matters!*

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this new **health literacy** program. Our health, and the health of our family and friends, is one of the most important things in our life. Are you looking to take more control of your health? We hope this workbook is the next step in your health literacy learning.



What does health literacy mean?

- Being able to get the health **information** you need
- **understand** the information
- make **decisions** based on the information
- and put those decisions into **action**

ABC Health Matters has two parts:

- *Take Charge of Your Health*, a workbook and workshop with a community practitioner. It covers how to talk about your health with your family and with your health care providers.
- *Map Out Your Health*, a workbook for you to complete at the workshop, on your own, or with your family. It looks at all the people and places in your community where you can go for help with your health.

Understanding health literacy is a shared responsibility between you and your health care provider. You are a partner in this learning journey. You decide what activities you want to do in this workbook. You choose those activities important to your life.

If your health is important to you, *ABC Health Matters* is for you. You will finish this program with a better understanding of health literacy than when you started! You will have more confidence to ask health care providers any questions you have so you can take charge of your health.

Take Charge of Your Health

Learning Outcome #1:

You are more confident discussing health matters, and start to take charge of your health.



What Will You Learn?

This workshop is about you. It is about your health, and the health of the people you care about. It is about your family, friends, and your community.

When the people we care about are sick or hurt, we want to be able to help them feel better. When they are well, we want to help them stay that way, to live a healthy life. The same is true for our own health.

In this workshop, you'll think about the people who are most important to you. You'll think about their health, and what you want for them. You'll think about your own health, and what you want for yourself.

Getting help for your health, or the health of someone you care about, can feel frustrating at times. We are not going to solve all your problems today, but in this workshop you'll learn you are not alone. Others find it difficult, too. You'll learn ways to start to change that—to start taking charge of your own “health matters.”

After all, your health really does matter.

A Place for Your Notes:

Activity 1



A Place to Begin: How are you feeling right now?

What to do?

Check the statement that best applies to you.

Think about your health, your experiences, how you feel.

- I'm healthy. No worries.
- I'm healthy, but I work hard at taking care of myself.
- I have health challenges, but I'm managing them.
- I'm okay, I guess. Could be better.
- I'm not healthy. I never feel really good.
- None of the above applies to me. Here's my situation.

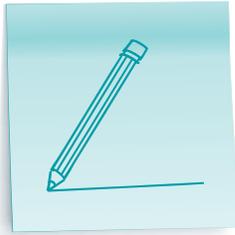


Think About...

- What does it mean to be healthy? How do you know when you are healthy?
- What does it mean to be unhealthy? How do you know when you are unhealthy?
- Does being healthy mean different things to different people?
- Do you take steps in your life to make yourself healthier?

A Place for Your Notes:

Activity 2



Your Health

Now that you have thought about what it means to you to be healthy, where would you put your personal health?

- If you think you are very unhealthy, mark 1.
- If you think you are very healthy, mark 10.
- Your health probably falls somewhere in between. Mark a number between 1-10 that best shows your health.



Healthy Living

What is one thing you could do to change your health?

If you did that one thing, would you give yourself a higher number?

Would that one thing be hard for you to do? Why or why not?



Meet Selena

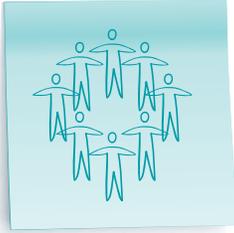
Selena is putting off seeing the doctor. The way she is feeling lately, she knows she should go, but she never feels comfortable there. She'd probably leave anyway without understanding what the doctor said, she figures, with all the medical terms he uses. She seems to leave the office more confused than when she goes in.



Think About...

Do you ever feel like Selena? Is your experience similar?

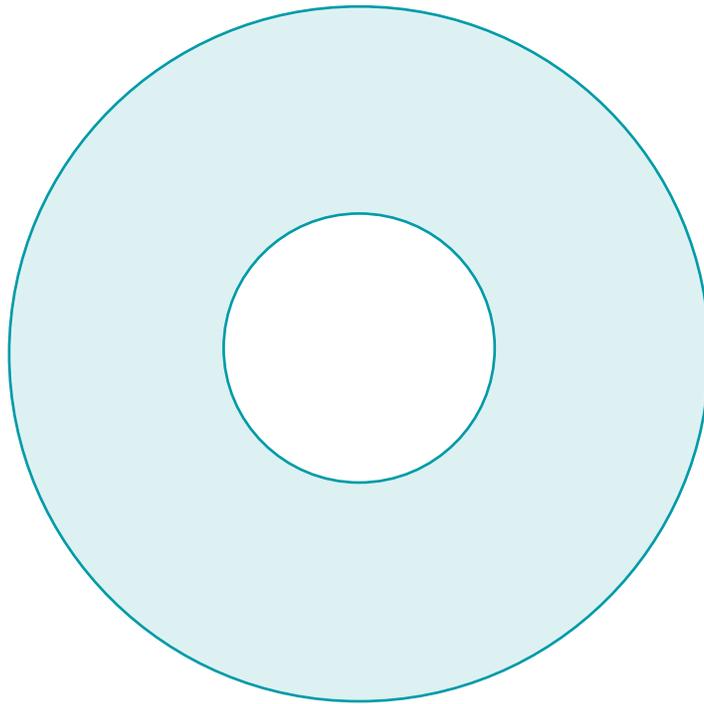
Activity 3



My Circle of Family and Friends

Are you responsible for the health of other people? Do you make appointments, plan meals, or manage someone else's medication? Maybe children, or an elderly parent, or a spouse, or a friend?

1. Put your name in the centre of the circle.
2. Put the name or names of the people for whom you are responsible in the outer circle.

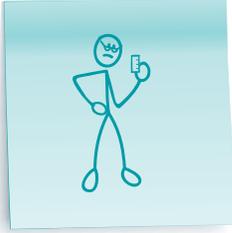


Your Family and Friends' Health

Now think about one of the people whose name you wrote in your circle of family and friends. Put a mark on 1 if you think the person is very unhealthy and 10 if you think they are very healthy, or mark somewhere in between.



Activity 4



Meet Jacques

Jacques is a grandfather. His grandson lives with him. Tonight, his grandson is sick with a fever, so Jacques decides to give him some children’s medication for lowering the fever. He isn’t sure how much medication to give the boy or how to read the chart on the medication bottle that explains it. Should he give him the amount for his age, or the amount for his weight? The chart is confusing, and the print is so small it is hard to read.

What do you need to do to take care of the person when they are sick?

What tasks do you do to keep the person healthy so they don’t get sick?

Do you need to consult or talk with doctors, or other health providers, for any of these tasks?

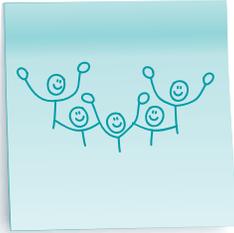


Think About...

- Like Jacques, do you ever have trouble understanding medication instructions?
- Like Jacques, do you have to give medication to people?
- How do you manage your family’s health?

A Place for Your Notes:

Activity 5



My Community and Culture

Our **community** and **culture** play a big role in who we are, what we feel comfortable with, and what we do. Because of that, community and culture often play a big role in our health.



Culture is the beliefs or customs of a group of people.
 A **community** is a group of people that live in the same area or share the same beliefs or customs.

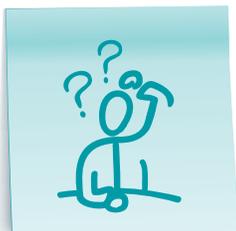


Meet Priya and Shawn

Priya is a vegetarian, so she doesn't eat meat. She eats food high in Vitamin C to help her absorb more iron from plants



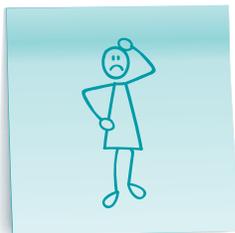
Shawn is Aboriginal. When he feels sick, he sees his medical doctor as well as an elder who is a traditional healer.



Think About...

- Do your community and culture influence the decisions you make about your health?
- How?

Activity 6 Your Choice



Then think about these questions:

- Let's say you've been feeling sick for a while and you finally go see the doctor. The doctor tells you a few things you need to do to feel better. How do you decide which things are right for you?
- What can a person do to make better health decisions for themselves, and the people they are responsible for? Share your ideas and tips.
- Your health is a shared responsibility between you and your health team. You have the right to say yes or no, or to ask more questions. You are the decision maker. You have the final say.
- Don't understand something? It's okay to say you don't understand. A good way to ask for an easier explanation is, "Can you explain that in a different way please?"



Take a family member or someone you trust with you when the doctor talks about test results, your choices, and the health decisions you need to make. Ask them to listen and take notes for you.

A Place for Your Notes:

Activity 7



Making Choices

We've talked about our right to make decisions. But how do we choose what decision is right for us? Our choices depend on many things: our health history, our values, what we know and what questions we ask. One of our most important health choices is when and how we take medication.



Think About...

- Have you ever had trouble getting health information or help? Did you understand the information once you got it?
- Did you make health decisions based on information you received, and put those decisions into action? Were you satisfied with the results?
- What role can your **pharmacist** or **health care provider** play in helping with these choices?
- Share your ideas and tips with others.



A **health care provider** is a person whose job it is to take care of the health of others. They have been trained in their job.



A **pharmacist** is a health care provider who helps you manage your medication safely and effectively. They give you the medicine your doctor prescribes, and they can give you advice on what non-prescription medicine to take.

Activity 8 Following Advice



Getting health information and making health decisions are one thing. Following through is another. Sometimes, health care providers ask us to make changes to how we live our lives: what we eat, how we exercise, how we manage stress. Those changes can be easy to agree to, but hard to put into practice. It's important for our health, though, that we **adhere** or **comply** with the medical advice we've agreed to, especially when it comes to taking medication.



Adherence or compliance means following a health care provider's advice for how you should look after your health—especially when it comes to how you should take a medication.



Meet Paul

At Paul's annual check up, his doctor tells him his blood pressure is too high. Paul gets a prescription for medication to help lower his blood pressure back into a healthy range. Paul doesn't mind taking pills to stay healthy, but he forgets some days, and he can never quite remember if he's supposed to take the pill before he eats, or after. He's also not sure the medication's really making a difference. He feels just the same as he did before.



Think About...

- Who could Paul ask for more information about how he should be taking his blood pressure medication?
- Have you ever started a medication or health plan, and had trouble sticking with it? What did you do?
- If Paul was a friend of yours, what advice would you give him?



If you're having trouble with adherence, talk with your health care provider about it. They might be able to recommend a different medication or lifestyle change that will be a better fit with your life.

Learning Outcome #2:

You have become an **advocate** for your own health, and the health of the people you care about.



Being an **advocate** means taking charge of your health. It means not waiting until things are really bad to get help or answers.

It means asking questions so that you understand what is happening to you, and what you can do about it. It means knowing you are in charge of your health information and what you talk about with a health care provider is private.

It means making decisions for yourself, based on the facts and choices, rather than letting someone else make decisions for you.



What Will You Learn?

In this workshop, you'll learn and practice ways you can be an **advocate** for your health.

You'll learn and practice ways you can be **an advocate for the health of others**, such as your child, an aging parent, a spouse, or a friend. You'll gain confidence so that you can be an advocate, and learn that it is your right and responsibility to do so.

After all, it's your health.

Activity 9



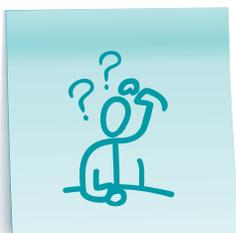
A Place to Begin: How do you manage your health?

What to do?

Check the statement that best applies to you.

Think about your health, your experiences, how you feel.

- I haven't been to a doctor in years. No need. I'm not sick.
- Something about my health has been bothering me lately.
- I try to keep on top of things. Get regular check ups, cancer screening tests, things like that.
- None of the above applies to me. Here's my situation.



Think About...

- Do you wait until you are sick before you do something about it? Or do you look into your health as soon as something doesn't feel right?
- Think of an example from your life. What was your experience?
- Can being a health advocate also mean taking care of your health before you get sick? How?

A Place for Your Notes:

Activity 10



Talking It Over

Sometimes it helps to talk about your health with someone. It could be a friend, a family member, a doctor, or another health provider.

Being a health advocate means reaching out to others to talk about your health, and the health of the people you care about.

Reaching out isn't always easy. Many people have trouble describing how they are feeling — putting it into words. Or they have other reasons for not wanting to reach out.

Taking that first step, talking to someone about your health, can save you from a lot of health troubles later on. It may even save your life, or the life of someone you care about.



Healthy Living

Think about your own community and friends.

Who can you talk to when you have a health question? Or when you feel worried about your health and just want to talk it over?

A health care provider I could talk to:

A family member I could talk to:

A friend I could talk to:

Someone else:

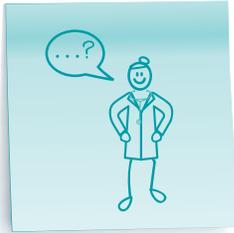


Health Challenge

Go ahead and talk about your health to one of the people on your list.

Activity 11

How are You?



One question you'll be asked when you talk to a health care provider is: "How are you?"

The health care provider may use different words. They may ask what is wrong, or how are you feeling. They may ask why you are there. They may ask about your **symptoms**.

It all means the same thing. They want to know how you are feeling so they can figure out how to help you.



Symptoms are words that you use to describe how you are feeling.

Symptoms are **personal**. There are no right or wrong answers. The words are your own. Only you know and can say how you are feeling.

Describe how you feel.



"I am **tired** all the time—I have trouble dragging myself out of bed. And I get these **headaches**."

Here's how I am feeling—my symptoms:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What about a person you care about and are responsible for?
What words would you use to describe their symptoms?

Activity 12 Practice



Practice the conversation you might have with your doctor or health care provider. In the real situation, the words won't be exactly the same, but by practicing, you'll know how you feel and how to describe it.

Work with a partner. Take turns playing each role. Or practice on your own if you like. Speak the words aloud. If you're in a group and are uncomfortable talking about a real health issue or problem you have, then feel free to make one up.

Health Care Provider

You

"What would you like to talk about?
How are you feeling?"

"I'm not feeling so great."

"Can you tell me more about it?"

"Yes, I can. Here are my symptoms:

_____"



Try This

Repeat the activity, but this time discuss your concerns or worries about the person you care about, the person whose health you are responsible for.

Activity 13



It's Okay to Ask

Maria finally goes to see a doctor for the first time in a long time. By going, she is **taking charge of her health**, instead of letting things get worse. That's good! ✓

The doctor asks Maria why she has come to the office. Maria says she is having trouble breathing and sometimes wheezes. Maria has described her **symptoms**. That's also good! ✓

The doctor sends Maria for a few tests to check her lungs, then asks her to come back in to discuss the results.

The doctor says Maria has asthma and needs inhalers. Maria is worried and unsure what is wrong with her. What are inhalers anyway? She doesn't ask anything and takes the prescription, then leaves.



Think About...

- Have you asked questions of a health care provider?
- Did you feel uncomfortable asking questions?
- What kinds of questions could Maria have asked her doctor?



The doctor or health care provider will talk to you about your **symptoms**, examine you, and maybe run tests.

The **diagnosis** is what all that information tells them.

For example, Maria's diagnosis is asthma.



Think About...

- Why might Maria have just left without saying anything?
- Do you have ideas or suggestions for making sure a person understands what a doctor or health care provider says?
- Have you ever talked to your pharmacist about medications, prescriptions or your health problems? In Maria's case, how might the pharmacist have helped her?



"I don't understand what you mean.
Can you say that in another way?"

Not the Only One

Maria isn't the only person who has trouble understanding what a doctor or health care provider has said to them. A lot of people do. If that is your experience too, you're not alone.

It's okay to ask questions. It's okay to say you don't understand what a word means. It's okay to ask a health care provider to say something in a different way. It's okay to ask them to repeat what they have said.



When you get a new prescription, talk to your **pharmacist or health care provider** about how to take the medication, and how it fits into your daily health routines and life. Ask questions. After all, it's your health.

Activity 14



Three Questions

Think about your own health, or the health of the person you care about and are responsible for. Think about the symptoms you described.

“Take it With You” Script

Here are 3 questions to ask your doctor or health care provider—whatever the reason for your visit. Take the questions with you on your next visit to be sure you get the information you need. It’s okay to take them out during your visit—you can read them right off the paper or your phone.



Try This

Work with a partner, or if you like, work on your own. Read the 3 questions aloud. Add your own questions.

If you are working with a partner, take turns being the doctor or health care provider and the person asking the questions.

1. **What** is my health problem?
2. **What** do I need to do?
3. **Why** do I need to do this?*

** It’s Safe to Ask, Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety*

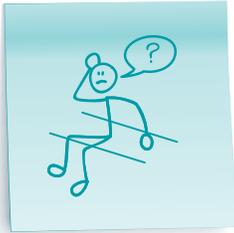


Going to get a health problem checked out?

Figure out your questions ahead of time so you’re ready.

What do you want to know?

Activity 15 It's Your Choice



Meet Adrian

Adrian's doctor tells him he needs an operation. Adrian says okay. The doctor should know, right? But the more he thinks about it, he's not sure that the operation is the best thing for him.

Think About...

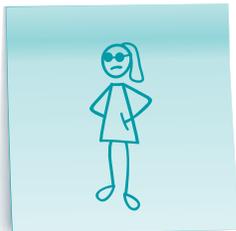
- Do you have choices when it comes to your health?
- Whose responsibility is it to make decisions about your health? Whose right is it?



A **second opinion** is when you see another doctor about your health problem.
It's okay to get a second opinion.
It's okay to compare what doctors say, and do what you decide is best for you.

A Place for Your Notes:

Activity 17



It's Your Right

Meet Alia

Alia wants to talk to someone about birth control. She thinks about going to a clinic she passes on the way to work each day, but is afraid they will call her parents. She doesn't want them to know.

Think About...

- Can the doctor or health care provider tell someone else about your health, or what you talk about, without you saying it is okay?
- Can someone else sit in on your doctor or health care provider's appointment without you saying it is okay?



Confidential means to keep private.

What you talk about with a doctor, or another health care provider, is private.

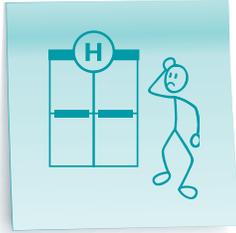
You need to say it is okay before any information is shared. That's giving your consent.



You can talk to a **pharmacist** about any medication you have questions about or may want to take in the future.

A Place for Your Notes:

Activity 18 Navigating a Hospital Visit



So far, you've learned about your health rights, responsibilities, and choices. You've practiced advocating for yourself and your family. But how does it look when you put it all together?

Meet Aly

Aly's doctor makes him an appointment at the hospital for a medical test. It might take a few hours, but he can go home right after because it's an **outpatient** procedure. Still, he's nervous. He hasn't been to this hospital before, but he knows it's huge, and it's across town. He's worried about getting lost or being late.



An **outpatient** is someone who is getting treatment in the hospital, but doesn't have to stay overnight.

An **inpatient** is someone who is admitted into the hospital to stay overnight, so that health care providers can look after them.

A Place for Your Notes:



Think About...

- How could Aly find out how long it takes to get to the hospital?
- If Aly drives to the hospital, what would he have to think about? What if Aly takes the bus?
- How can Aly prepare for his hospital visit?
- What should he bring to his appointment?
- If Aly doesn't know any of this information, how can he find out?



If you have an appointment at a hospital or health care facility that's new to you, go a few days earlier for a practice run. You can find your way to where you need to go without being rushed or anxious.

A Place for Your Notes:

Activity 19

Staying Overnight at a Hospital



After looking at Aly’s test results, his doctor tells him Aly needs surgery on his ankle. Aly agrees to have the surgery. Getting the surgery means being an inpatient at the hospital for a few nights, so that nurses can keep an eye on him while he recovers. To get ready, Aly’s surgeon tells him he can’t eat for the 12 hours before the surgery. That’s confusing for Aly. Aly has diabetes, and his family doctor has told him he needs to take insulin with food to stay healthy. Which medical advice is more important: not eating to prepare for the surgery, or eating so he can take the medication he needs? He’s not sure what to do.



Think About...

- Who can Aly ask for help?
- Have you ever been given medical advice that doesn’t match something you were told before? What did you do?

A Place for Your Notes:

Aly's surgery was a success! It's going to take some time and work for him to walk comfortably again, though. He has to go through **rehabilitation** first. His surgeon introduces him to rehabilitation specialists who will help him walk again.



Rehabilitation helps people regain strength, relearn skills and find new ways of doing things after being sick, getting injured or having surgery. Rehabilitation can take place in the hospital or in a community clinic.

When Aly has recovered enough, he gets **discharged** from the hospital. He's not completely better yet, though. The rehabilitation specialists tell him he needs to go to an outpatient rehabilitation clinic. The surgeon tells him he needs to come back for a follow-up visit. His nurse tells him he needs to take a new medicine, watch his nutrition, and start to exercise. It's a lot of information to remember!



To be **discharged** from a hospital means your health care team at the hospital says it's safe for you to go home. When you're discharged, you leave with instructions for how to keep recovering at home.

Think About...

- What advice would you give Aly for managing his recovery?
- Have you ever been discharged from a hospital? What did you do?
- If Aly forgets an instruction or two, who can he ask for help?

Congratulations!

You have completed the *ABC Health Matters* Workbook 1 and have taken the next step in managing your health. For the last activity, we hope you will make a **pledge**. The pledge can be personal or you can share it with others.



A **pledge** is a serious promise to yourself or others.

My Pledge

I pledge to be healthier by...

Sometimes making a pledge needs an action plan. An action plan is a list of the steps you will take to make your pledge happen.

My Action Plan

What I will do differently is...

What I can do right now is...

What I will do in the next six months is...



Thank you for participating in
the *ABC Health Matters* program.



Find out more at:
www.abccactivatelearning.ca