



Program Implementation Guide for Health Care and Information Providers

Good Questions for Your Patients' Good Health

Ask Me 3™ is an educational program provided by the **Partnership for Clear Health Communication at the National Patient Safety Foundation™** – a coalition of national organizations that are working together to promote awareness and solutions around the issue of low health literacy and its effect on safe care and health outcomes.



www.npsf.org/askme3

Improving Clear Health Communication with Ask Me 3™

A guide to using Ask Me 3 resources

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to **Ask Me 3!** This Implementation Guide provides tips on using the **Ask Me 3** program in your day-to-day work with patients and/or other constituents.

Ask Me 3 is a program provided by the **Partnership for Clear Health Communication at the National Patient Safety Foundation™**, a coalition of national organizations that are working together to promote awareness and solutions around the issue of low health literacy and its effect on health outcomes.

Ask Me 3 is designed to enhance communication between providers and patients. Patients should be encouraged to understand the answers to three questions:

1. **What is my main problem?**
2. **What do I need to do?**
3. **Why is it important for me to do this?**

Along with encouraging your patients to use the **Ask Me 3** approach, simple techniques can increase your patients' comfort level with asking questions, as well as compliance with your instructions after they leave appointments.

More information on **Ask Me 3** can be obtained at www.npsf.org/askme3.

WHY IMPLEMENT ASK ME 3?

Health literacy – the ability to *read, understand* and *act upon* health information – is now known to be vital to good patient care and positive health outcomes. When patients lack the ability to understand and act upon medical information, it can put their health at risk. Conversely, the ability to understand and act upon health information empowers patients and supports the efforts of health care providers, which ultimately leads to an increase in positive health outcomes.

WHO SHOULD USE THIS IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE?

This guide can serve as an invaluable resource to *providers of care* and *providers of information*.

- It provides access to tools and resources to help your practice communicate with people under your care in a way that can better help them understand and act upon your diagnoses and instructions, ultimately improving their health outcomes.
- It also provides tools for helping people with low health literacy, and helps you find the most current research on its impact. Further, the guide offers access to tools that can be used for in-service staff training, as well as information on how to locate local literacy services nationwide.

ASK ME 3 EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS, TOOLS AND RESOURCES

The **Ask Me 3** program offers a variety of easy-to-use educational materials for patients, providers and health-concerned organizations, some available in both English and Spanish, some available in English, Spanish, French, Chinese, Russian, and Arabic. Many of them can be downloaded free of charge.

- A **Poster** reminds and encourages patients to “Ask 3” so they are sure they understand what they need to do for good health.
- A **Patient Brochure** educates patients about the **Ask Me 3** program and motivates them to ask their doctor, nurse or pharmacist the three questions to more effectively manage their health. This brochure also provides tear-out **Ask Me 3** checklists for their next visit to a medical office or clinic.
- A **Provider Brochure** explains the scope and impact of low health literacy, and how it may affect communication within their practice.
- An **Organization Brochure**, developed for organizations whose constituents are providers of care or providers of health information, facilitates understanding of organizations’ complementary roles in advancing health literacy with other health professionals.

These and other health literacy tools and resources are available
at www.npsf.org/askme3.

INTEGRATING ASK ME 3 INTO YOUR PRACTICE OR ORGANIZATION

There are many ways you can integrate **Ask Me 3** tools and resources into your practice or organization to improve communication with patients. Improved communication can help increase your patients' ability to understand and act upon the information you provide, ultimately improving their health outcomes.

The first step is to order more materials by visiting www.npsf.org/askme3. Once you have these materials, consider implementing any or all of the following approaches to integrating clearer health communication into your practice . . . or come up with your own!

Here are some easy and productive ways to get started. . . .

- Visit www.npsf.org/askme3 for comprehensive background to help you better understand or explain the health literacy issue.
- Meet with your colleagues and staff to identify the implications of health literacy to your organization.
- Use the *prevalence calculator* available at www.clearhealthcommunication.org. It's a great tool that can help you and your staff to identify the potential percentage of your patient population that has low health literacy and, therefore, may need additional help understanding and acting upon medical information and instructions.

Some people with low health literacy use well-practiced coping mechanisms that effectively mask their problem. Chances are that some of your patients are among the 93 million people in the United States who may be at risk due to difficulty understanding and acting on health information.

- Conduct an *in-service training* for your staff on the low health literacy issue, and on using tools available via the **Ask Me 3** website to help improve communication with patients.
- Perform an *audit* of the points of contact – written, visual, and verbal – that your practice has with its patients both inside and outside of the practice environment. The more you learn about health literacy, the better equipped your practice will be to determine if these communications are easy for patients to understand. For example, if all of your written materials are in English, but a third of your patient base speaks Spanish, it's possible that these materials are unclear to some of your patients.

Create an audit that reflects the specific needs of your practice and its patients. Some of the areas you may want to examine include:

- How information is provided to patients
- The reading level of the written materials you provide, such as medication instructions
- Your protocols for patient follow-up and questions

There are numerous other ways to creatively integrate Ask Me 3 into your daily work. . . .

Review the brochures written especially for you!

- Depending on whether you provide health care or information, you can order copies of the **Ask Me 3** brochures prepared especially for you – either the Organization Brochure or the Provider Brochure. Both brochures explain the scope and impact of low health literacy, the importance of clear health communication, and the benefits of **Ask Me 3**.

Share the Patient Brochure!

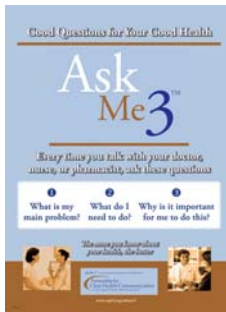
- The highly informative, easy-to-read Patient Brochure educates patients about the **Ask Me 3** program, and how using the three questions can help them better communicate with doctors, nurses, physicians assistants, pharmacists, and other health care or information providers.
- The brochure includes tear-out **Ask Me 3** reminder checklists to prepare for their next visit to your office or clinic and to take notes during their visit.
- You can share it with patients by:
 - Handing it out with any instructions or insurance paperwork upon a patient’s arrival at your office
 - Conducting a special mailing to patients
 - Distributing and discussing the brochure during a health fair or event

Hang the Poster!

- The **Ask Me 3** program offers a poster that can be used to stimulate curiosity about **Ask Me 3**, and inform patients and staff about the program. Hang the poster:
 - In your waiting room
 - In the examination room
 - On the ceiling, above the examination table
 - On a door
 - In a bathroom
 - In the staff break room
 - Anywhere patients and staff might see it!

Because clear communication is the foundation of patients being able to understand and act on health information, the **Partnership for Clear Health Communication at the National Patient Safety Foundation** provides **Ask Me 3** — a quick, effective tool to improve health communication between patients and providers. Educational materials to support the program are described below and may be ordered at www.npsf.org/askme3.

Poster



The **Ask Me 3** poster can be used to stimulate curiosity about **Ask Me 3** and inform patients and staff about the program. Hanging this poster in waiting rooms, lobbies, and/or exam rooms makes it more comfortable for patients to inquire about the **Ask Me 3** approach and may motivate them to use the three questions to improve communication and understanding.

Patient Brochure



This informative brochure has been developed using design and writing guidelines to enhance clear health communication. It will educate patients about the **Ask Me 3** program and motivate them to ask their doctor, nurse, or pharmacist the three questions to more effectively manage their health. It also provides a tear-out **Ask Me 3** reminder checklist to prepare for their next visit to your office or clinic, so patients know their role in improving communication with their providers. Also included are a form to bring with them on which they list their current medications and a reminder page for taking notes during their visit.

Provider Brochure



Specifically developed for the health care provider to explain the scope and impact of low health literacy and how it may affect communication within their practice, this brochure offers communication tips, with emphasis on **Ask Me 3** and how using this solution can positively impact patient health outcomes.

Organization Brochure



This brochure was developed for organizations whose constituents are providers of care or providers of health information. It explains the scope and impact of low health literacy, the importance of clear health communication, and how organizations can be involved in the movement. This will facilitate understanding of organizations' complementary roles in advancing health literacy with other health professionals.



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