

Examples of Rewritten Consumer Health Information

Here's one paragraph from a managed care patient newsletter. The article was targeted to women of childbearing age. The intent seems to have been to encourage women to seek early prenatal care. It's about the 12th grade reading level. Below the original, are examples of how it can be rewritten at the 8th grade and 4th grade reading level. Notice the shift from an impersonal to a personal, conversational style through the use of the pronoun "you." There is also a shift from medical generalizations (e.g. "premature births and newborn illnesses are decreased by early pregnancy care") to concrete recommendations for action (e.g. "make an appointment to see your doctor as soon as you can.")

Original:

"It makes good sense that premature births and newborn illnesses are decreased by early pregnancy care. The doctor is actively involved in testing the pregnant woman for pregnancy-induced diabetes and a host of other problems that would not be detected by the patient alone. We know that these problems cause premature births and illness in newborns. It certainly makes sense that early detection and treatment of these problems by the doctor results in healthier babies."

Rewrite at the 8th grade level:

If you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant, call for an appointment right away. Getting care **early** in your pregnancy will help you have a healthy pregnancy and healthy baby. Your doctor will give you a complete check-up and will also do certain tests to make sure everything is going well. If there are any problems, it's good to find them early for the best chance for a healthy baby.

Rewrite at the 4th grade level: (Readability has been lowered by using shorter sentences and eliminating most words with more than 2 syllables)

If you are pregnant or think you might be, go to the doctor as soon as you can. If you start your care **early**, things will go better for you and your baby. Your doctor will give you a first exam. Tests each month or so will let you know if all is going well. If there is a problem, you will know it right away. Then we can do what is needed to keep you healthy. Early care is the best way to have a healthy baby. Your baby counts on you!

Other examples of health information written at more than one grade level:

<p>13th Grade Level</p> <p>The relationship between arteriosclerotic heart disease and the risk factors of cigarette smoking, hypercholesterolemia, and hypertension is well established. These risk factors significantly increase an individual's probability of developing coronary artery disease and myocardial infarction.</p>	<p>5th Grade Level</p> <p>Cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol can damage your heart. You can lessen your chance of having a heart attack. Reducing these risks will help.</p>
<p>College Level</p> <p>With the onset of nausea, diarrhea or other gastrointestinal disturbances, consult your physician immediately.</p>	<p>12th Grade Level</p> <p>If you experience nausea, diarrhea, or other stomach or bowel problems, call your physician immediately.</p>
<p>8th Grade Level</p> <p>If you start having nausea, loose bowel movements, or other stomach or bowel problems, call your doctor immediately.</p>	<p>4th Grade Level</p> <p>If you start having an upset stomach, loose bowel movements, or other problems, call your doctor right away.</p>
<p>12th Grade Level</p> <p>Cigarette smoke paralyzes cilia inside your bronchial tree. These tiny hair-like bodies normally function like brooms to sweep bacteria, mucus and, dirt from your lungs. Without the action of cilia, more mucus settles in the lungs, causing you to cough and making you more susceptible to infections. Quitting smoking enables the cilia to work effectively again.</p>	<p>5th Grade Level</p> <p>Cigarette smoke slows down the work of the small hairs in the lungs (cilia). These hairs work like brooms to sweep out germs and dirt from your lungs. When they do not work, you cough and get more infections. Quitting smoking helps clean your lungs.</p>
<p>High Grade Level</p> <p>The medication should be taken twice a day with food. Use of nasal saline lavage, followed by nose blowing, greatly decreases nasal congestion.</p>	<p>Lower Grade Level</p> <p>Take one pill with breakfast and one with supper every day. Spray the salt water into your nose and then blow your nose. This will help you breathe better.</p>