

Handout: Using written and other resources with people with LTCs

Using written materials

People are often given a lot of written information to read 'when they get home'. Discussing materials with people beforehand means they are more likely to read the information.

Tips for using written materials effectively

- Think about the specific needs of the person when you choose resources. Written materials you like may not be appropriate. Even people who are good readers don't want to read highly complex material. A lot of people don't like getting information from reading. Limit it to one resource where possible
- Choose written information that isn't too complex and technical and has useful visuals.
- Explain to the person **why** they need to read this material e.g. *"This booklet has got useful information about the serious side effects of this medicine"*.
- Help the person to understand **who** the material was written in the first place e.g. *"This was written by the Heart Foundation for people like you who have heart disease"*.
- Help the person to understand **how** the material works e.g. *"First there is information about your condition, then information about medicines here. These headings help you find the right information"*.
- Help the person **locate** the key information for their stage e.g. *"There is a lot of information in this booklet – it's best if you focus on this part about using your inhaler – you can read the rest later"*.
- Make sure the person knows **what** you want them to do differently as a result of reading the resource e.g. now you have read this section, can you think about one thing that you can change when it comes to your evening meal?"
- Highlighting, underlining, circling or numbering key information will make the material more meaningful to the person.
- Don't give a person a booklet if it is in English and you are not sure if they can read English. Explain there is no written resource in their first language – *"I am sorry, we don't have this booklet in Korean"*. Then explain *"I could give you this English booklet if you or someone in your family reads English. Would you like this English booklet?"*

Using visuals

The saying 'a picture is worth a thousand words' is very relevant in health situations. Research on graphics and visuals shows that the brain remembers visual information better than written or spoken information.

Pictures and diagrams help people understand sequences and difficult and unfamiliar concepts, including how their body works. Pictures and diagrams also have greater impact than words only.

Visuals can also include your own drawings for people as well as using anatomical models, such as knees, heart and spine.

Tips for using visuals

- Choose visuals that concentrate on the main message
- Where possible, use colour pictures and diagrams.
- Handwrite plain English words on diagrams to explain technical words.
- Keep a folder with copies of good visuals, graphics, diagrams and pictures so that you can access them quickly to use with people. Otherwise, have the visuals on a tablet or computer.
- If necessary, draw a diagram or a sequence – 1, 2, 3 and so on - or record the sequence on the person's mobile phone.

Using apps

There are now so many apps available to help people manage a huge range of conditions, including long-term conditions. Just like written resources, some apps are great, some are good and some are not at all helpful.

New Zealanders of all ages use apps (e.g. Google Maps, Uber Eats, Air NZ, My Fitness Pal and St John Ambulance). In health situations, apps can be very useful for people with LTCs for, among other things:

- reminding people to take medicines
- helping people to cope with mental health issues
- reminding people to take tests e.g. blood sugars
- helping people to make food choices
- helping people to record daily activity.

Tips for using apps

- Ask the person if they are currently using apps. With their permission, look at their phone and identify the apps they are using.
- Explain that apps can be useful for reminding people to take their medicines, check their blood sugars, keep a food diary and lots of other things.
- Link any apps you are suggesting to goals in the person's care plan. If the person doesn't have a care plan, ask them what would help them manage their LTCs.
- Show them relevant apps on the Health Navigator website. Explain the differences between free and paid versions of apps. If people need time to look through the apps, ask them if they are confident at downloading apps themselves. Make a note in the person's records. Arrange to follow up with the person to see if they downloaded an app.
- If people want to select an app immediately, then go through the app with them and get them to load it onto their phone.