

## Supporting health literacy: Using the Conversational Health Literacy Assessment Tool (CHAT)?

Service providers working with Lifetime Care and Workers Care use the CHAT to understand a person's health literacy at a point in time.

In working with people in Lifetime Care and Workers Care, "health" information extends to information about their injury or illness and associated disability. Health literacy is essential for lifelong understanding and management of the person's injury/illness and the impact of associated disability on their over-all health and well-being. It's therefore important to use words and terms that enable the person to consider their disability in the context of their over-all health and health management.

**The Conversational Health Literacy Assessment Tool (CHAT)** is a quick health literacy conversation tool that anyone can use to assist with:

- identifying health literacy support needs
- identifying barriers and challenges across the four categories of health literacy (access, understand, apply, and appraise) which may be preventing the person from managing and maintaining their health
- managing health literacy challenges and needs in a conversational way
- building rapport and trust
- delving beneath superficial responses to health and wellness questions to better identify possible challenges
- increasing understanding of the person's context to inform planning and case manager role

The CHAT is a series of ten open-ended questions across five domains. It's not intended to provide a score or "measure" of health literacy. Instead, it enables an open and thorough discussion that reveals health literacy information is key to promoting self-efficacy and independence.

### Who can use the CHAT?

Anyone can use the CHAT to assist in holistic assessment, including assessing health literacy. The CHAT fits well with the person-centred approach of My Plan by providing case managers with a tool they can use to assist in fulfilling their role of promoting and maximising health literacy with participants/injured workers and their families.

### Do I need to be trained or accredited to use the CHAT?

There is no training requirement, accreditation, or approval process to use the CHAT. It is readily available on the Internet.

Users are encouraged to present the 10 questions in a way that the person they are working with will understand. Principles for the use of the CHAT therefore include:

- understand the intent of each question
- state the questions in a context relevant for the person
- ask the questions in a way that they will understand
- listen carefully and use follow-up questions

You don't have to ask all the questions all of the time. You can be selective and ask those questions likely to give you the most meaningful information.

### When should I use the CHAT?

The CHAT is an optional tool to use during the initial assessment of the newly injured person and as a part of plan preparation and development.

Where you identify a gap in the person's health literacy on one or more domains, you can build remediation strategies into the next My Plan.

### Can I use CHAT with families?

While it's important to involve participants and injured workers as much as possible in building health literacy, it's also important that families and carers are involved in health literacy assessment and facilitation as much as the participant/worker chooses. You can use CHAT with families, with some modifications of the questions as needed.

### What are the CHAT questions?

Access and understand			Apply	Appraise
Supportive professional relationships	Supportive personal relationships	Health information, access, and comprehension	Current health behaviour/s	Health promotion barriers and support
Who do you usually see to help you look after your health?	Aside from healthcare providers, who else do you talk with about your health?	Where else do you get health information that you trust?	What do you do to look after your health on a daily basis? (Prompt for diet, sleeping habits, medication, and treatment plan)	Thinking about the things you do to look after your health, what is difficult for you to keep regularly doing?
How difficult is it for you to speak with <i>[that provider]</i> about your health?	How comfortable are you asking <i>[that person]</i> for help if you need it?	How difficult is it for you to understand information about your health?	What do you do to look after your health on a weekly basis? (Prompt for exercise, physical activities, social activities, and visits to healthcare professionals)	Thinking about the things you do to look after your health, what is going well for you?

\*\*For more detail on the application of the questions in the icare context, see the CHAT prompts section

# CHAT prompts

You can refer to the prompts below to help you explore the CHAT domains. For people with life-long disability, domains 1, 2 and 3 may, in time, be addressed as a single domain – merging the questions referring to service providers, informal supports and alternate sources of information. It will continue to be important to ask Question 6 about the person’s ability to understand and use the health information from all these sources.

<b>Domain 1: Supportive professional relationships</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Who do you usually see to help you look after your health/injury/disability?</li> <li>2. How difficult is it for you to speak with [that provider] about your health?</li> </ol>	
<p>These questions can begin a discussion about the range of service providers that the person trusts to discuss their health, injury/disability management and/or wellness needs with when needed.</p> <p>These questions can form the introduction to assisting the person to reflect on who they can turn to when they have health/injury/disability/wellness questions, and other appropriate sources of support.</p>	<p><b>Prompts</b> to delve deeper into accessing support might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“how easy is it for you to tell them everything that you need to about your concern?”</i></li> <li>• <i>“how easy is it for you to ask questions when you don’t understand what they are telling you?”</i></li> <li>• <i>“you mentioned you would ask XXXX about XXXX, have you considered discussing this aspect of your health with YYYY (a more appropriate source)?”</i></li> </ul>

<b>Domain 2: Supportive personal relationships</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Aside from healthcare providers, who else do you talk with about your health?</li> <li>4. How comfortable are you to ask [that person] for help if you need it?</li> </ol>	
<p>These questions can begin a discussion about the range of other supports that the person trusts to discuss their health, injury/disability management and/or wellness needs with when needed.</p> <p>These questions help identify if the person has supportive personal relationships with family, friends or peers who can be relied upon to provide emotional or practical advice or assistance.</p>	<p><b>Prompts</b> to delve deeper into accessing support might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“do you feel that [that person] understands your disability and/or health needs and can provide you with the support that you are seeking from them?”</i></li> <li>• <i>“do you have any concerns about asking them for help?”</i></li> </ul>

### Domain 3: Health information access and comprehension

5. Where else do you get health/injury/disability information that you trust?
6. How difficult is it for you to understand information about your health?

These questions may assist in identifying whether the person has access to reliable information about their health and/or disability, and whether they understand that information well enough to put it into practice.

These questions may also identify when the person relies on inappropriate sources of information and may open discussions about the reliability of some sources of information within their network and/or social media posts.

These questions may also identify specific barriers which need to be over-come in the person's ability to understand information they are receiving, for example:

- language
- literacy for written materials
- memory

**Prompt** people to consider alternative sources of information such as:

- the internet
- TV (programs and advertisements)
- newspapers
- leaflets at GPs or health centers

*"have you ever asked your [GP or other health service provider or family] to help you understand this information or decide how (or if) it applies to you?"*

Question 6 applies to all sources of health advice and support (i.e. service providers, informal supports and other sources identified across questions 1 to 5). To delve further into comprehension, consider:

- *"when someone explains an aspect of your health or disability to you, do you usually find it difficult or easy to understand?"*
- *"What can help make it easier for you?"*
- *"can you share a time when you felt well informed about your health/disability? Why did that work?"*

### Domain 4: Current health behaviours

7. What do you do to look after your health on a daily basis? (Prompt for diet, sleeping habits, medication, and treatment plan)
8. What do you do to look after your health on a weekly basis? (Prompt for exercise, wellness activities, social activities, and rehabilitation programs)

It's important for you to go into these questions prepared with an understanding of recommendations that service providers have made to the person for their health and injury management. You can then explore whether the person is able to effectively apply the information they've been given to manage their health, and whether they prioritise health activities.

Answers may indicate a range of barriers or challenges to the person understanding or applying information to their own situation.

## Domain 5: Health promotion barriers and support

9. Thinking about the things you do to look after your health, what is difficult for you to keep doing on a regular basis?
10. Thinking about the things you do to look after your health, what is going well for you?

An important part of health literacy is the ability to appraise the information and/or strategies that you are using to manage your health. Being able to identify when something is working, or not working, helps to inform strategies in the future.

Exploring barriers to achieving health outcomes can help identify the nature of the barriers – the strategy itself might not be the problem, but things impacting on the person which negatively impact the strategy.

*“what are some of the things that make completing your [home exercise program] difficult?”*

*“what sort of things, or people, make it easier?”*

### How do I find out more about the CHAT?

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