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26th March 2026 – to accompany pre-recorded session [HERE](#)



Transforming Medication Safety
Northern Ireland

Introducing



5 Moments for Medication Safety



Session content



- Background & Context
- Health Literacy: what it is, what it enables
- HSC 5 Moments for Medication Safety Tool
 - Co-design
 - 5 Moments Tour
 - My Medicines List
- Toolkit



Background - Context



Medication errors persist as the most common source of harm for patients worldwide.

Medication errors. Half of the avoidable harm in health care is related to medications

WHO, 2023 Patient safety



2017 World Health Organization (WHO) 3rd Global Patient Safety Challenge

“Medication without Harm” , reduce level of severe avoidable harm related to medications by 50% over the ensuing 5 years.

Background - Context



2020, DoH launched

Transforming Medication Safety for NI (TMSNI) Strategy

4 Domains set out key commitments

- Patients and the Public
- Health & Social Care Staff
- Medicines
- Systems & Practices



[Link to: Transforming medication safety in NI strategy](#)

Valuing Medicines: Sept 25

A strategy for the sustainable use of medicines in Northern Ireland

Department of Health
An Roinn Sláinte
Mánnystrie O Poustie
www.health-ni.gov.uk

[PowerPoint Presentation](#)

DoH commitment



Health Minister Mike Nesbitt, July 2024

“Tackling health inequalities must be at the heart of health reform in Northern Ireland”

“building health literacy”

[Minister sets out series of key initiatives | Department of Health](#)

Strategic Planning and Performance Group

Health inequalities Northern Ireland context



more prescription items dispensed **in the most deprived areas of NI** compared to the least deprived
(NI General Pharmaceutical Services 2021/22)

NI: people from the **most disadvantaged communities**

- heavier burden of illness
- higher mortality rates

(DoH, Health Inequalities Report, 2023)

What is health literacy?



'Health literacy is about our knowledge, skills, understanding and confidence to be able to use health and care information and services to make good health decisions.'

Defined through co-production by service users Northern Health and Social Care Trust Service Users (2019)

Low health literacy has been linked to a range of important problems.

These include:

unhealthy lifestyles and poor general health

low use of preventative services, like vaccinations and screening

difficulty taking medicines correctly

increased A&E attendances and hospital admissions

reduced life expectancy

Health literacy

Scale of the challenge

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) estimates 7.1 million adults in the UK have a reading age of nine years

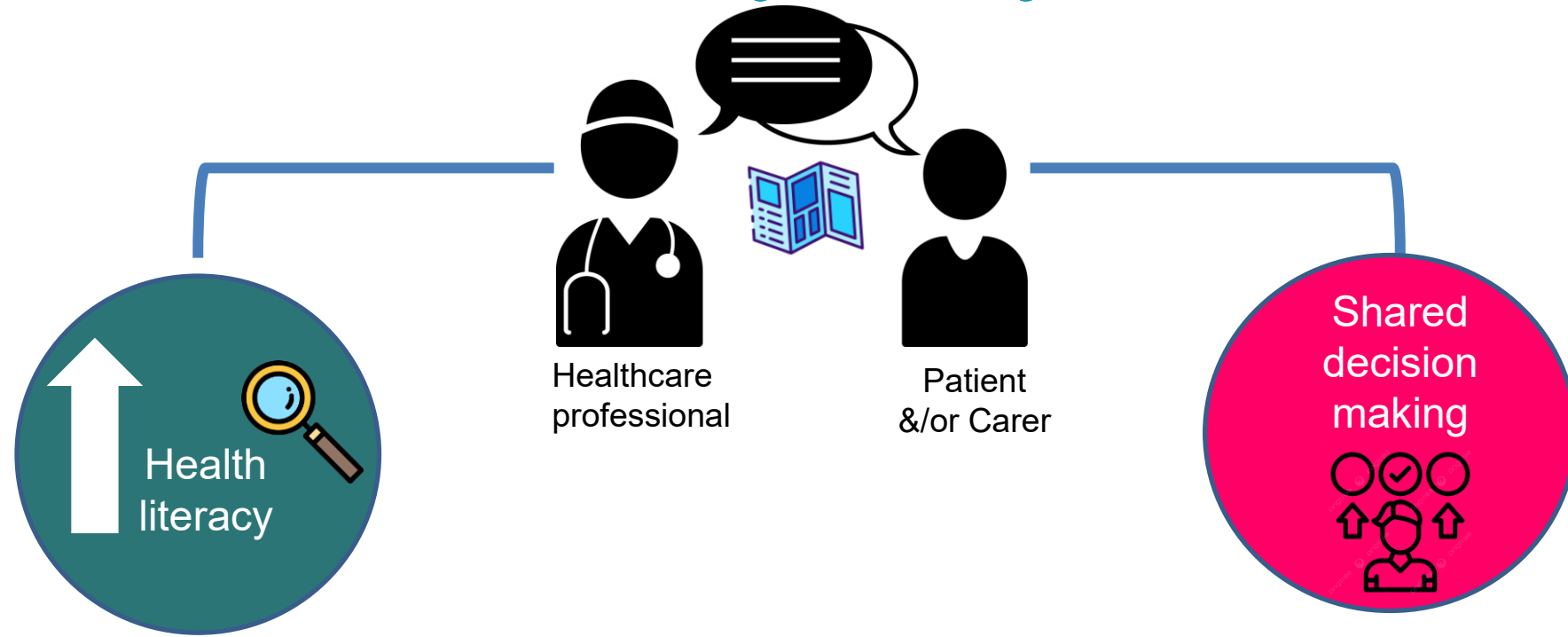
Translated = **1 in 6 adults** with a literacy level of **9-11 years of age** or below

Medical/healthcare communications are not always appropriately targeted at the reading and comprehension levels of the patients and communities they are for

40% of adults report that they struggle to understand health content

Increases to **60%** when the health content contains numbers and statistics

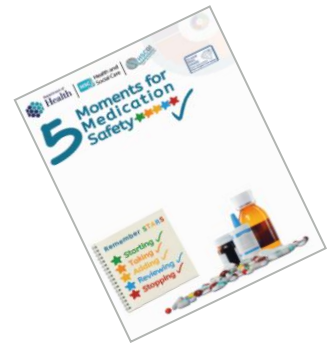
Health literacy: Why it matters



Impacts of improving health literacy

-  **Reduced use of emergency services**
-  **Increased patient self-management of care**
-  **Increased uptake of preventative services**
-  **Improved patient experience and 'waiting well'**
-  **Reduced health inequalities**
-  **Increased productivity**

5 Moments for Medication Safety



Sept 22



Sept 20



Mar 25



Dec 24

July 25



Sept 25

Equality

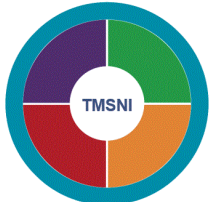


3rd Nov 25

Aug 25



Oct 25



Transforming Medication Safety Northern Ireland



Department of Health
www.health-ni.gov.uk

5 Moments for Medication Safety



Starting a medication



Taking my medication



Adding a medication



Reviewing my medication



Stopping my medication

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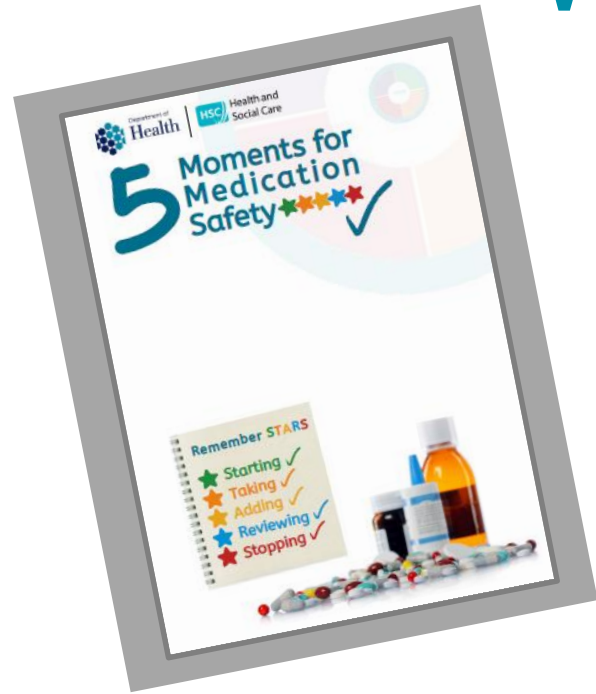
5 Moments for Medication Safety booklet

The booklet includes:

- An introduction, what it is and who it is for
- Guidance on how to use the tool
- The 5 moments & relevant questions
- Notes sections
- My Medicines List
- QR code links to supplementary information
- User feedback via QR code



Who it's for.....



Health professionals:
Introduce, encourage and support use of tool.

Patients, families, and carers:
To use with support from health professionals.

Starting a Medication

5 Moments for
Medication
Safety 



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Northern Ireland

- Ensuring the correct medication is initiated.
- Encouraging patients to ask questions about the medication, including its purpose, potential side effects, and interactions with other medications.



Starting a medication

- What is the name of this medication and what is it for?
- What are the risks and possible side effects?

Taking my Medication



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- Properly taking the medication as prescribed.
- Encouraging patients to be aware of how and when to take their medications, including any specific instructions regarding food or other medications.



Taking my medication

- When should I take this medication and how much should I take each time?
- What should I do if I have any side effects?

Adding a Medication



- Understanding the implications of adding new medications.
- Encouraging patients to consider other medication they may be taking, how these may interact and what they should do if they suspect an interaction.



Adding a medication

- Do I really need another medication?
- Is it OK to take this medication with my other medications?



4 Reviewing my Medication

5 Moments for Medication Safety



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- Regularly assessing the effectiveness and necessity of current medications.
- Encouraging patients to be aware for how long they should take each of their medicines and the review process for each.



Reviewing my medication

- How long should I take each medication for?
- Am I taking any medications that I no longer need?

Stopping a Medication



- Safely discontinuing medications when appropriate.
- Encouraging patients to understand the process for discontinuing a medication, including any necessary follow-up or alternative treatments.



Stopping my medication

- When should I stop each medication?
- If I have to stop taking a medication due to an unwanted effect, where should I report this?

Toolkit



Booklet (hard copy and online)



Short version (A4 Poster)



Community Pharmacy stickers



Easy-read version (**Coming soon** online)



My medicines list (hard copy and online)

Thank you for listening

For further information email: medicine.safety@hscni.net

Access full suite of resources via link below:

[5 Moments for Medication Safety - DOH/HSCNI Strategic Planning and Performance Group \(SPPG\)](#)