

Tech Literacy in the Digital Health Era



BALTIMORE
**DIGITAL
EQUITY**
COALITION

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What is “tech literacy?”

This term is often used interchangeably with digital literacy or digital skills, and share a common definition

Technology literacy is the ability to effectively use technology to access, evaluate, integrate, create and communicate information.

What actually is the “digital health”

The broad scope of digital health includes categories such as mobile health (mHealth), health information technology (IT), wearable devices, telehealth and telemedicine, and personalized medicine.

As defined by the FDA

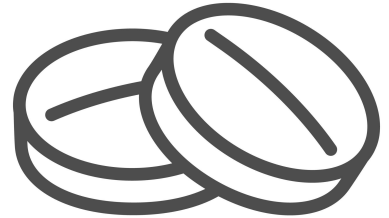
Without tech literacy, digital health can look like:

- Inability to communicate with healthcare providers via MyChart or other portals
- Lack of understanding of appointment options that include telehealth, leading to longer wait times to receive care
- Inability to effectively utilize health tools or connected health devices
- Lack of access to patient-led resources such as second opinions, support groups, or healthcare advocacy or appeals



Without tech literacy, digital health can look like:

- Missing notifications for prescription refills
- Providers unable to provide adequate documentation because they cannot effectively utilize their technology
- Misunderstanding medical history and diagnosis by patients and providers
- Being unable to track symptoms or engage in preventative health choices



Digital health continues to expand exponentially, without critical support for users (both patients and providers).

Lack of tech literacy is not
non-compliance.

A lack of engagement with digital
health should be met with support
and curiosity, not penalization.

Cultivating Digital Health Users

- Assume everyone is trying their best
- Avoid assumptions about technology usage and understanding base on identity
- Assess digital skills competency
- Identify community resources for digital skills training and 1:1 digital navigation
- Prepare for non-digital skills technology barriers

Positive Assumptions

- Assume the user has a baseline level of common sense and problem solving that sets them up for success
- Do not assume a lack of digital skills is by choice or “willfully refusing to learn”

Assess digital skills **BEFORE**
connecting a user with digital
health technology

Assessing Digital Skills

- Assessing digital skills doesn't have to be formal
- Verbal assessments or questionnaires can yield information as easily as a performance-based digital skills assessments.
- Formal assessments are still useful, but may require more hands on support to be effective

Assessing Digital Skills

Try these:

- [NDIA Digital Navigator Skills Assessment Form Template](#)
- [Northstar Digital Literacy Assessment](#)

Identify Community Resources & Support

- Develop relationships with local and virtual programs that can assist community members with digital skills or digital health tools.
- Determine which programs offer 1:1 or digital navigator support. Note whether this is virtual, phone-based, or in-person, and consider which may benefit your community members most.

Identify Community Resources & Support

Try these:

- [The Marylanders Online Tech Support Helpline](#)
- [Computer Training @ the Enoch Pratt Free Library](#)
- [Senior Planet center in Montgomery County, MD](#)

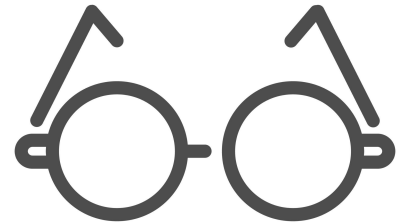
Guiding Telehealth Resource



[Navigating the Telehealth Neighborhood: Patient Portal Training for Digital Navigators](#)

Non-Digital Skills Barriers to Digital Health

- Written literacy skills
- English language fluency
- Vision & cognitive barriers
- Fine motor skills or inability to use a touch screen



Non-Digital Skills Barriers to Digital Health

- Lack of privacy or quiet
- Unhoused or inconsistently housed
- Lack of home internet access
- Lack of appropriate personal device



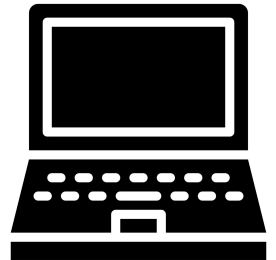
Prepare to address non-digital skills barriers to digital health participation

- Identify programs and services that address literacy and language support
- Work with social workers within healthcare and community organizations to provide wrap around services



Prepare to address non-digital skills barriers to digital health participation

- Identify and build partnerships with programs that provide or connect users with devices and low-cost home internet
- Know who can help new digital health users of all incomes make decisions about their devices and connectivity



Identifying other digital equity support in your region

- Look for tech councils or digital equity or inclusion coalitions
- Reach out to local libraries and community colleges
- Find local social workers who can connect with health and education programs

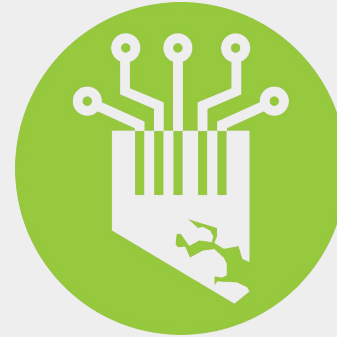
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It's not just patients

- Everyone in a digital health ecosystem should be committed to understanding and using digital health tools
- Healthcare systems need to invest in internal staff training as well as support for end users
- Caregivers and medical assistants should be just as engaged as doctors or patients

Q&A

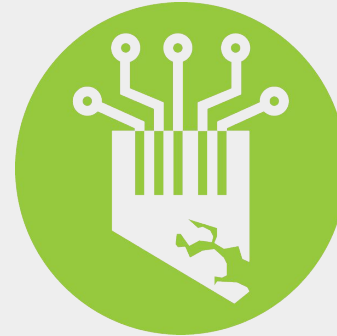
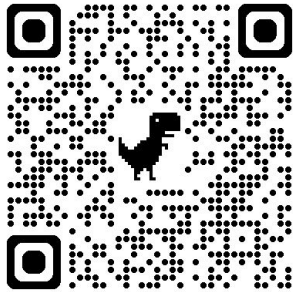


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