



The **Conversational Health Literacy Assessment Tool (CHAT)** is a series of ten open-ended questions across five domains used conversationally in the patient assessment process.

CHAT can be used to help identify health literacy support needs, barriers and challenges that may be preventing patients from managing and maintaining their health. Using CHAT enables patients to openly and conversationally communicate difficulties they are experiencing now or have experienced in the past.

Use CHAT to help build rapport and understanding during your usual patient assessment time. You can also use these questions if you feel patients are communicating one thing, yet their progress or health status indicates another. The conversational format will increase your understanding of the situation.



### Who is this tool for?

All clinical staff (nurses, midwives, doctors and allied health professionals).

### When should you use this tool?

CHAT can be used as part of your existing intake and assessment procedures to gather a broader perspective of a patient's health literacy level. You can also choose to use CHAT as part of discharge planning to help tailor any follow-up care required to the patient's individual health literacy needs.

To maximise the conversation and information shared by your patient:

- understand the intent of each question
- state the questions in a context relevant for your patient
- take the patient's level of health literacy into account and ask the questions in a way that they will understand
- listen carefully to understand.



## CHAT quick guide

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
<p><b>Supportive professional relationships</b></p> <p><i>Who do you usually see to help you look after your health?</i></p> <p><i>How difficult is it for you to speak with [that provider] about your health?</i></p>	<p><b>Supportive personal relationships</b></p> <p><i>Aside from healthcare providers, who else do you talk with about your health?</i></p> <p><i>How comfortable are you to ask [that person] for help if you need it?</i></p>	<p><b>Health information access and comprehension</b></p> <p><i>Where else do you get health information that you trust?</i></p> <p><i>How difficult is it for you to understand information about your health?</i></p>	<p><b>Current health behaviours</b></p> <p><i>What do you do to look after your health on a daily basis?</i></p> <p><i>What do you do to look after your health on a weekly basis?</i></p>	<p><b>Health promotion barriers and support</b></p> <p><i>Thinking about the things you do to look after your health, what is difficult for you to keep doing on a regular basis?</i></p> <p><i>Thinking about the things you do to look after your health, what is going well for you?</i></p>

Note: see the additional CHAT prompt sheet for examples of how to find out more information for each domain.

## CHAT is not

CHAT questions are not intended to be delivered as a checklist. They help you to shape an open conversation around the literacy themes. CHAT is not rigid or prescriptive. Providers across healthcare sectors and socio-demographic environments see wide variation among their patients. Some CHAT questions will be more useful than others in some clinical contexts with certain patients.

## Remember

Include the patient's carer and family in the conversation if this aligns with the patient's preferences. For some patients, this may be the first time that they are asked questions of this nature conversationally and they may be confused as to your motivation. If this occurs, reassure the patient that this is simply part of a broader assessment of their health needs and what matters to them. You may not have time, nor need to ask all the questions. Consider being selective and asking those questions likely to give you the most meaningful information.

### Safety Fundamentals and Accreditation

Implementing this Safety Fundamental for Person Centred Communication will support healthcare organisations to demonstrate they are meeting actions in *National Standards 2: Partnering with Consumers*, *4: Medication Safety*, *5: Comprehensive Care* and *6: Communicating for Safety*.

### Acknowledgement and source

The CEC consumer partners for their input and support

[O'Hara et al 2018. Conceptualisation and development of the Conversational Health Literacy Assessment Tool \(CHAT\).](#)