

Informative and Persuasive Public Health Communication

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Communicating to the Public about Health Risk

Goal: To inform and influence behavior
to protect or promote public health

- What factors improve effectiveness?
- Characteristics of the Sender, Message, Channel, Receiver, and Environment

Channels for conveying health information

Internet:

- Primary source for health information seekers
- Social media effective for quick delivery of urgent messages
- Not accessible to non-readers, non-computer users

Television/Radio:

- Primary source of non-health-oriented persons
- Promotes awareness, knowledge through redundancy
- Broadest reach to widest audience

Written Messages

Use Plain Language for high readability

- 4th to 8th grade reading level
- Many pictures or charts, labeled clearly
- Everyday words and examples
- Short and simple sentences
- Use relative risk, not absolute risk

Tailor Communication to the Audience

- Determine audience understanding of the problem
- First address information the audience wants to know, then include what you think they should understand
- Identify and use information sources the audience uses

Develop Messages with the Audience

- Be sensitive to lifestyle and culture
 - Be positive and supportive
- Include recommendations that are actionable
 - Be specific as to what to do and how to do it

Make it Personal

- Help the audience see that the message applies to them
- Use example so that the audience can see themselves in the situation
- Use inclusive terminology
 - Such as “older” never “elderly”

Practical Advice

- Choose the message and channels that are most likely to succeed in the given situation with the intended audience
- Pretest
- Monitor
- Modify if needed
- Evaluate