

Inclusive language matters

Creating health information everyone can use is about more than plain language. It is about making sure the language, tone and design you use is appropriate for your intended audience. You might consider:

- Cultural background
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Disability
- Age
- Medical condition¹

Remember one size does not fit all! To reach diverse audiences we need to adapt to different needs and preferences.

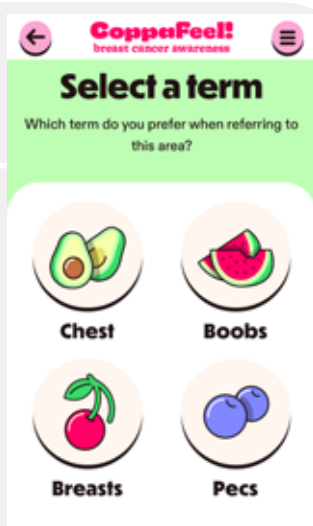
Top tips

- Ask questions about the language you are using.
- Produce information for a diverse audience.
- Listen to user feedback.
- If there are conflicting views, reflect them.
- Be inclusive without reducing to stereotypes.
- Be conscious of outdated terms.
- Pair newer terms with more familiar terms.
- Consider your audience's health literacy.
- Explain when challenged and adjust as needed.

Case study: Letting the user choose their terms

CoppaFeel! gives users the option to choose the language most appropriate to them.

self-checkout.coppafeel.org/select-a-term/



Involving users

Co-produce and test information with users to make sure it is inclusive and culturally appropriate.



Person-first versus disability-first language

- **Person-first** language is the medical model – "a person with a disability".
 - **Disability-first** language is from the social model – "I am a disabled person".
- User testing can help you identify the most appropriate model.

Neutral not negative

- ✓ "people have"
- ✗ "people suffer with"

Avoid phrases which could be offensive – "going down a blind alley" "tone deaf".

Question everything

- Why are we using these words?
- What assumptions are we making?
- What images do we use?
- What colours?
- What tone and branding?

References

1. service-manual.nhs.uk/content/inclusive-content

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