



# CREATING AN ENGAGING EXPERIENCE FOR YOUR PATIENTS:

Why It's **IMPORTANT** and How to Accomplish it



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# Introduction

You've likely heard a great deal about patient engagement recently, as this important part of patient care has continued to gain attention. There's a good reason for this as, generally speaking, the more engaged a patient is, the healthier they tend to be. This is due to taking a proactive approach to their own care.

In this eBook, we'll take a closer look at patient engagement, starting by defining the term and discussing why it's so important to improve patient engagement in your practice. Then we'll explore seven ways to accomplish greater engagement in your practice, followed by six solutions you can implement to streamline this process for you. Let's get started.

- **What is patient engagement?**
- **Why is patient engagement important?**
- **7 Ways to Accomplish Patient Engagement**
- **6 Patient Engagement Solutions to Implement**
- **Conclusion**





## What is patient engagement?

The term “patient engagement” refers to practices and providers interacting with patients in such a way that it encourages them to take a more proactive role in their health. The main focus of patient engagement is patients and providers collaborating to create improved health outcomes.

Patient engagement involves a strong partnership between a patient and their care team, in which there is true collaboration on decision making. This kind of partnership is a two-way street. Clinicians must provide information about conditions, symptoms, treatment options, healthy lifestyle choices, etc. and patients must communicate with providers about their feelings, concerns, and what they feel is realistic as far as treatment adherence is concerned. Additionally, when patients communicate their feelings and concerns, it's important for providers to listen and take those factors into consideration when planning treatment.

**“Patient engagement involves a strong partnership between a patient and their care team, in which there is true collaboration on decision making.”**



## Why is patient engagement important?

There are a number of benefits to be gleaned from patient engagement, each of which play a role in why this particular aspect of patient care is so important. As patients learn and understand more about their health, they become actively engaged in their well-being, leading to better, more proactive care and fewer visits to the ER. Additionally, providers are able to treat engaged patients

There are also financial benefits to patient engagement, as it leads to fewer no-shows, which increases revenue. Plus, patients who are engaged feel more satisfied in their care and tend to remain with their provider, leading to better patient retention. Additionally, using engagement tools lowers costs and eases the burden on your practice staff, increasing satisfaction and reducing turnover. Essentially, patient engagement is actually important to both patients and your practice staff and can lead to positive outcomes all around.

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## 7 Ways to Accomplish Patient Engagement

Given the important role patient engagement plays in seeing positive health outcomes, practices would do well to prioritize increasing engagement among their patients. Here are seven ways to accomplish this:

- 1. Implement automation:** Automation helps to connect your practice to your patients, increasing engagement without increasing the burden on your staff. Patients are more satisfied and engaged when they can efficiently address their care needs through means like online scheduling, digital intake, and automated reminders from the practice.
- 2. Identify the best way to engage with your patients through segmentation:** Different patients have different needs, so it's best to consider their demographics, social determinants of health, and psychographics. This will help you to identify what each patient segment most needs and how you can address those needs in your engagement efforts.
- 3. Involve your patients in shared decision-making:** Traditionally, patients would go to the doctor with a problem and that doctor, utilizing their knowledge and experience, would tell the patient how they were going to address the issue with no prior discussion. With shared decision-making, the patient and provider discuss the patient's condition and care options and work together to come up with a plan. While this requires an investment in patient education, it pays off in improved patient satisfaction and better health outcomes.
- 4. Maintain continuous care:** With providers' packed schedules, it's easy to fall into the routine of simply providing care when a patient is sick. It's better, though, to engage with your patients on a regular basis, reminding them of preventive care and offering valuable health information. This will strengthen the patient-provider relationship and help keep well-being at the top of the patient's mind.




Automation helps to connect your practice to your patients, increasing engagement without increasing the burden on your staff.”

## 7 Ways to Accomplish Patient Engagement, cont'd

- 5. Use your patients' preferred communication methods:** Each patient is different and prefers to communicate by different means, including phone, email, and text. Make note of their preferences and do your best to meet your patients where they are and communicate in the way that's most likely to reach and engage them.
- 6. Provide patient education:** Patient education empowers patients with quality information as they take part in shared decision making and seek to take control of their own health and well-being. According to the Journal of the American Osteopathic Association, **even 45 minutes of patient education can improve the management of chronic conditions.** Knowledge truly is power, and your patients will be more engaged when you empower them in this way.
- 7. Reduce barriers to care:** If there's one thing that can cause patients to become disengaged it's constantly running up against barriers to receiving care. Make it a priority in your practice to determine what those barriers are and seek to overcome them. Utilize virtual care when possible to reach patients who have a hard time getting into the office. Connect your patients who are struggling with the resources that can help them, such as information on food banks for those facing food insecurity and guidance on how to obtain health benefits for those currently without them.

Implementing any of these steps will help to improve patient engagement in your practice. Implementing more than one, or even all of them, will revolutionize the engagement level you see.



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## Patient Engagement Solutions to Implement

Arguably, providers are incredibly busy today, and it's easy to look at ways to accomplish patient engagement and think, "I don't have time for that." This is where technology comes in and helps you to accomplish these goals without adding to your already significant workload. Here are six solutions that can help you get started:

- 1. Patient Reminders:** Reduce no-shows with automated appointment reminders, sent through whichever channel your patients prefer. You can also send clinical reminders for routine visits, vaccines that are due, and other preventive care. This way, you can maintain continuous care and contact for your patients without adding a large burden to your workload.
- 2. Digital Intake:** Allow your patients to fill out their intake forms on their own time before they show up for their appointment. This not only satisfies patients as they don't have to wrack their brains on the spot in the waiting room to remember their entire health history, it also typically provides more accurate and thorough information as patients have time to remember and can feel more comfortable being completely honest by filling these forms out privately. Additionally, if you choose a solution that directly integrates into your EMR software, you can save your staff the time it would take to scan those forms in or input the data themselves.
- 3. Clinical Decision Support:** CDS helps with providing detailed patient education information to support that shared decision making, but does so without putting the burden on you as the provider. Instead you can print out or electronically send quality information that patients can read and then come back to ask questions about as needed.



“Reduce no-shows with automated appointment reminders, sent through whichever channel your patients prefer.”

## Patient Engagement Solutions to Implement, cont'd

- 4. Telehealth:** With telehealth, you can provide your patients with convenient access to care, especially those who have difficulty getting into the office due to mobility or transportation issues. As a bonus, telehealth can often be a more efficient way to provide care for clinicians, so it's truly a win/win. For best results, choose a solution that includes teleradiology capabilities so that you can provide the highest level of care virtually, and also bill accordingly.
- 5. Online Scheduling:** Enable patients to efficiently schedule appointments at their convenience, eliminating the burden of finding time to call during business hours and possibly spending time on hold. For best results, choose a solution that utilizes prompts to determine the correct appointment type to avoid scheduling mistakes that would require manual cleanup later.
- 6. Two-Way Texting:** One of the best ways to increase patient engagement is to improve communication between patients and their provider. With two-way texting, you can facilitate convenient, secure communication between your practice and patients, giving your patients greater access to information and answers.

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## Conclusion

Patient engagement plays an important role in your patients' overall health and well-being. While providers today are arguably more busy than ever before, thankfully there have been a number of advancements in technology that allow for automation to increase engagement without increasing the burden on providers and practice staff.

At Henry Schein SolutionsHub, we understand the importance of finding the right vendors to come alongside your practice to streamline the process of increasing patient engagement. With solutions such as medpod for telehealth, rimidi for clinical decision support, and **Yosi Health** for digital intake, online scheduling, and two-way texting, among other fantastic vendors, we're confident we have the technology to meet your specific needs. For more information or to get started, visit [henryscheinsolutionshub.com](https://henryscheinsolutionshub.com) and speak to a Solutions Consultant today.



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