

The High Cost of Long Wait Times



There are few greater sources of frustration for patients than waiting a long time to see their provider. Research shows that the patient experience is heavily influenced by the amount of time spent waiting for care—**when wait times go up, satisfaction goes down.**¹ And those negative experiences can have a ripple effect on patient referrals and retention, and your organization's reputation and brand.

Long wait times are more than just an inconvenience for patients. They affect provider and staff efficiency and can have far-reaching operational and financial consequences for healthcare organizations, such as **front-desk bottlenecks, no-show appointments and lost revenue.**



Wait Times Matter



20 MINUTES

Average medical practice **wait time**²



10-15 MINUTES

Average length of a **primary care appointment**³



2x

Wait times for healthcare services are twice as long as for other service categories⁴



30%

of patients feel anxious, frustrated or stressed while waiting for their doctor's appointment⁵

Long wait times can impact:

PATIENT RETENTION



1 in 5 patients

say they have **switched doctors** because of long practice wait times⁶

PATIENT SATISFACTION



30%

of patients say have **left a doctor's appointment** because of a long wait⁷



Long wait times are one of the key detractors of medical practices' **Net Promoter Score**, the measure of whether their patients would recommend them to a family member or friend.



96%

of patients' online complaints about their physicians relate to customer-service issues, such as long wait times.⁸



The Good News

Long wait times don't have to be an unavoidable part of the patient experience, and many healthcare organizations are working to address them.



49%

of healthcare organizations have **changed their processes** to improve patient wait times⁹



Strategies to Reduce Wait Times



Give patients the option to **self-schedule appointments online**, reducing inbound calls for staff and streamlining patient flow in the waiting room.



Leverage **automatic text-message and email appointment reminders** to decrease late arrivals and no-shows.



Prompt patients to **check in for their appointments ahead of time** to streamline their arrival.



Give patients mobile, tablet and kiosk check-in tools that **automatically capture their demographics and medical history** and integrate with your PM/EHR.



Automate insurance verification, referrals and consent management to save staff time during registration and reduce manual data entry.



Provide **time-saving payment options** to patients like card on file and automated payment plans.



Review **appointment analytics, front-desk workflows and patient satisfaction surveys** to understand common bottlenecks and areas for practice improvement.



QUICK TIP

Be transparent with patients about their expected wait times and keep them updated on when they'll be seen. This eases anxiety, promotes more tolerance for the wait and makes patients feel respected.



It's easy to think that wait times are just 'business as usual' in healthcare, but they're not—they impact everything from staff efficiency to patient satisfaction and retention. **The truth is that patients don't need to be in the waiting room for very long.** If you give them a way to complete their check-in electronically, either ahead of time or quickly when they arrive at the office, then you can effectively reduce patient wait times.



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Click to learn how Phreesia's automated intake tools can help your organization improve patient wait times.

LEARN MORE

¹ National Center for Biotechnology Information, 2017.

² Medical Group Management Association, DataDive Practice Operations, 2017.

³ National Center for Biotechnology Information, 2017.

⁴ Altarum, 2018.

⁵ Phreesia Research, 2019.

⁶ Business Wire, Ninth Annual Vitals Index Physician Wait Time Report, 2018.

⁷ Journal of Medical Practice Management, 2016.

⁸ Medical Group Management Association, 2018.