



YOUR PRACTICE / BUSINESS

## Three Reasons to Make the Switch to Online Appointment Scheduling

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### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Online appointment scheduling is a game changer when your office is closed or the phones are busy.
- With online appointment scheduling, patients looking for a time-sensitive appointment can immediately check your practice's up-to-date availability from your website.
- Do your homework and find the online scheduling platform that fits the needs of your practice and your budget.

People today want convenience, whether it be from their bank, credit card, favorite retail store, or restaurant. They demand it from the companies who hold their loyalty, including their health care providers (you). They don't want to call and possibly be put on hold, and they want to use an app or schedule an appointment on your website.

Online appointment scheduling is an easy way to meet the convenience demands of patients. If you haven't yet offered your patients online scheduling, it's time to add this important tool to your website and online profiles.

An online appointment schedule is a basic digital opportunity to provide immediate patient satisfaction and streamline office procedures, removing the administrative burden off your front-office staff. When your team no longer has many schedule-related duties, they can focus on more in-person tasks that help them, and you connect more with your patients.

Here are three reasons your practice can gain by switching to online appointment scheduling.

Scheduling on Their Terms

Your practice runs like most do. You have office hours from 8 a.m. or 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. (with an hour lunch break), and you could stay open later and/or open later a couple of days a week to accommodate patient schedules. But if you have patients working full-time jobs and managing other family commitments during the day, this lack of access can be frustrating if you don't have a convenient way for them to contact you.

Online appointment scheduling is a game changer when your office is closed or the phones are busy. Think about it: When did you last call a business during office hours? Most of us make all our purchases online after business hours when we're on our couches winding down for the night. You can offer your patients and potential patients the same convenience.

Shop for different online appointment scheduling providers to get a feel for what they offer at various price points and then set a budget. Some services are basic, easy to use, and will get the job done. Others offer robust services like web-to-text functionality, allowing patients to request an appointment via a text message directly from your website.

### Filling Those Gaps

Keep your practice operating smoothly and successfully by maximizing your appointment volume. Online appointment scheduling will help you fill those gaps that can make the day unproductive. Emergencies happen, and things force patients to cancel their appointments, sometimes at the last minute. These lead to lost revenue and can hinder your practice's growth.

With online appointment scheduling, patients looking for a time-sensitive appointment can immediately check your practice's up-to-date availability from your website. For those wanting a last-minute appointment when their schedule opens up, online scheduling allows you to fill those slots and give your patients even more flexibility. Let other patients who can make it fill those no-show or last-minute cancellation slots and keep your practice humming.

Again, do your due diligence and look at different online scheduling platforms. Some even offer automated appointment confirmations and reminders designed to help reduce late cancellations and no-shows. Using these simple digital tools to minimize schedule disruptions can support your bottom line and make things convenient for your patients.

### Delivering a Better Patient Experience

You are making a first impression before your patient's first visit, and online appointment scheduling can help set the stage for a positive patient experience. When you give patients the option to self-schedule directly from your website, you free up your front-office staff for other tasks and allow patients the flexibility to work around your office hours to make an appointment.

When phone calls no longer burden staff, they can focus on a better in-office patient experience by offering a welcoming greeting, answering questions (especially important for new patients), and just facilitating an efficient appointment.

Do your homework and find the online scheduling platform that fits the needs of your practice and your budget. Using a platform that allows for growth is also a good idea. You might not need all the bells and whistles right now, but think of your growth goals and find a platform to grow into.

When you invest in online appointment scheduling, you invest in practice efficiency, which can positively impact patient and staff satisfaction.

