

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—both to get an appointment scheduled and after arriving in the office. 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

But long wait times are more than just an inconvenience for patients. They jeopardize efficiency, inhibit access to care, and can have far-reaching operational and financial consequences, including more **front-desk bottlenecks**, a **higher no-show rate** and **lost revenue**.

Wait times matter...



26 days

average wait time for a physician appointment²



18 minutes

spent in the waiting room after arriving, on average³



84% of patients

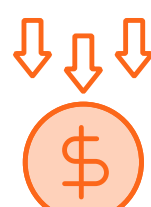
believe wait times are important to their overall healthcare experience⁴

...and keeping patients waiting can lead to missed revenue



30%

of patients have left a doctor's appointment due to a long wait⁵



\$200

lost for every open or no-show appointment slot, on average⁶

More than the money

In addition to lost revenue, long wait times can negatively impact:

PATIENT RETENTION

63%

of patients say they would **switch doctors** if they had to consistently wait too long for their appointments⁷

PATIENT SATISFACTION

97%

of patients have **reported frustration** about having to wait too long before seeing their doctor⁸

NPS SCORES

7.8x

higher likelihood of a patient being **Passive or a Detractor** when leaving a negative comment about long waits⁷

The bottom line? Long wait times can harm an organization's reputation, reduce patient loyalty, raise healthcare costs⁹ and worsen clinical outcomes.¹⁰



The good news

Long wait times don't have to be the status quo, and many healthcare organizations are working to reduce them.

49%

of healthcare organizations have changed their processes to improve patient wait times¹¹

Strategies to minimize wait times



Use self-scheduling or appointment-request tools to reduce inbound calls for staff and improve patient flow.



Send automated appointment reminders via text message or email to decrease late arrivals and reduce no-shows by up to 78%.¹²



Offer digital check-in tools that prompt patients to check in for their appointments ahead of time and reduce their time spent in the waiting room.



Implement end-to-end scheduling automation to offer previously scheduled patients an earlier appointment time, if a slot becomes available.



Gather data before the visit, including patients' demographics, medical history and social risks, and automatically send the data to your PM/EHR.



Automate manual tasks like insurance verification, referrals and consent management to give front-office staff more time to focus on patients.



Offer real-time payment options like Apple Pay®, Google Pay™ and card on file to help patients spend less time at the front desk.



Use surveys and analytics tools to monitor operational strengths and weaknesses, including appointment trends, front-office workflows and the average time it takes to schedule a visit.

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.

—Shari Crooker, RN, Practice Administrator, Gwinnett Center Medical Associates



Ready to improve wait times?
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3. "How patient wait times affect customer satisfaction," Fierce Healthcare, September 2019.

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6. "Missed appointments cost the U.S. healthcare system \$150B each year," Healthcare Innovation, April 2017.

7. "Full report: Understanding perceptions about wait times," NRC Health, October 2022.

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11. "Will the doctor see me soon?" Medical Group Management Association, March 2018.

12. Phreesia Network data