

Using Health Information Technology to Engage Patients

Question

How can healthcare organizations encourage patients to use health information technology (IT) to improve engagement?

Answer

Many new technologies have been created for patient engagement, from artificial intelligence (AI)-powered patient portals and chatbots to mobile health apps, digital dashboards, interactive televisions, virtual assistants, and more. These digital tools and platforms are designed to augment communication, interaction, and collaboration between healthcare providers and patients.¹

Encouraging patients to use health IT can provide valuable benefits for healthcare providers and patients, including enhancing care and outcomes.² Patients can communicate with their healthcare providers, schedule appointments, access their health information and test/laboratory results, get automated medication notifications, and more.

Permitting patient access to information and providing direct communication with providers also can increase the quality of life for patients with chronic diseases, and encouraging patients to participate in their own healthcare may result in better preventive care and improved medication adherence.³

Below are some examples of ways to engage with patients via health IT:

- **Take advantage of specific touch points in your clinical setting to tell patients how they can use technology to access information and receive education.** Some of these touch points include the receptionist at check-in, media in the waiting area, the nurse/medical assistant taking vitals, the healthcare provider or advanced practice provider during an exam, the receptionist at check-out, and an after-visit summary printout or follow-up email.

Pre-recorded messages as part of the phone system also can relay important health reminders and tips. For specific strategies on engaging patients at touch points in the clinical setting, see the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology's [Strategies for Improving Patient Engagement Through Health IT](#).

- **Encourage patients to use technology (e.g., cellphones, tablets, and computers) to access patient portals before and after appointments.** Inform patients about the information they can access via the patient portal and other available functions (depending on the portal's capacity), including:
 - Asking questions or clarifying information with healthcare providers.
 - Seeing test results.
 - Scheduling appointments.
 - Requesting prescription refills.
 - Consulting health records and protected health information.
 - Reading patient education materials.
 - Viewing billing statements and making payments.
 - Receiving reminders about care gaps.
 - Obtaining instructions on preparation for procedures or tests.
- **Reassure patients about privacy and security.** Make sure patients know that messages and emails are sent in a secure system to assure them of confidentiality. More opportunities for patient-provider communication via secure messages or secure emails may result in better transitions of care, more attention to routine health issues, timely exchange to address patient questions and concerns, better monitoring of patient conditions, and more.
- **Encourage patients to use mobile and wearable technology (e.g., smartwatches and remote monitoring tools).** Mobile technology links patient and healthcare providers via apps that bolster two-way messaging, health education, and chronic disease management. These devices may provide valuable insight into patients' clinical information and illustrate a more thorough picture of their overall health.

- **Consider telehealth (virtual visits) for patients.** Telehealth is another positive way to engage patients because it offers more convenient and accessible ways for them to consult with their healthcare providers. Elderly and home-bound individuals, people living in rural areas, and people who have busy schedules may find it simpler and more practical to consult with healthcare providers from the comfort of their homes.⁴

Emerging technologies — such as augmented reality and virtual reality — will continue to support better patient engagement, and data-driven insights from these technologies will permit providers to further customize healthcare for their patients.⁵

Resources

- [American Medical Association: Patient Portal Optimization: Engage Patients While Minimizing Care Team Burden](#)
- [MedPro Group: Safety Strategies for Remote Patient Monitoring](#)
- [Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology: Patient Education and Engagement](#)
- [Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology: Patient Engagement Playbook](#)

Endnotes

¹ Worrall, A. (2025, April 23). *Patient engagement technology: What it is and why you need it*. Relias. Retrieved from www.relias.com/blog/patient-engagement-technology

² Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology. (n.d.). Patient engagement. In *Health IT Playbook*. Retrieved from www.healthit.gov/playbook/patient-engagement/

³ Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology. (n.d.). *Strategies for improving patient engagement through health IT*. Retrieved from www.healthit.gov/resource/strategies-improving-patient-engagement-through-health-it

⁴ Ibid.; Worrall, A., *Patient engagement technology: What it is and why you need it*; RightPatient. (2023, November 8). *The future of patient engagement in medical practices*. Retrieved from www.rightpatient.com/guest-blog-posts/the-future-of-patient-engagement-in-medical-practices/; Heath, S. (2015). Effective patient engagement strategies using health IT. *EHR Intelligence*. Retrieved from www.adsc.com/blog/effective-patient-engagement-strategies-using-health-it; Zaporowski, K. (n.d.). *5 ways healthcare technology helps improve patient engagement*. CollaborateMD by EverHealth. Retrieved from www.collaboratemd.com/blog/how-technology-improves-patient-engagement/

⁵ RightPatient. (2023, November 8). *The future of patient engagement in medical practices*. Retrieved from www.rightpatient.com/guest-blog-posts/the-future-of-patient-engagement-in-medical-practices/

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