

10 Questions Your Office Needs to Ask Every New Patient to Increase Treatment Acceptance

Asking the right questions during patient discovery helps establish the patient relationship, set the right expectations and eliminate many potential mistakes.



Why so many questions?

There is no single question that will fully unlock your understanding of how to best provide care for every patient. Each patient is different, with different needs, experiences and expectations. That's why it's best to ask a variety of questions, to understand your patient's true motives and expectations, resulting in better treatment presentation, acceptance and overall care.

1

Who can we thank for referring you to our office?

This question helps express gratitude to the patient and helps you understand where the patient heard about your office. When you ask this question consistently—and write down the sources mentioned—you better understand where customers most consistently hear about you. Then, you can invest your resources to optimize that channel, bringing in more patients than ever before.

2

How can I help you? Tell me more?

Though this question feels obvious, it is crucial. Getting patients to explicitly share why they've come to your office is fundamental to understanding their expectations. The follow-up, "Tell me more", then helps you dig even deeper into their wants and values when it comes to dental care. Repeat this method until you feel both you and your patient have a mutual understanding of how to move forward, so you can effectively deliver their desired results.

3

Why now? Why did you come in today vs...etc

This question helps establish any time and urgency expectations the patient may have. It also gives you insight into important time constraints coming up soon, such as switching to a new insurance, a graduation, a new job, upcoming wedding, etc. Finding additional factors that are impacting their decisions help you better tailor options for their needs.

4

What are you looking forward to in the next month, year?

This question gives you better insight into the patient's life, beyond their dental care. Patients love to feel valued. Getting to know them beyond just patients requires getting to know their interests, passions as well as any potential fears or anxiety. Make sure you take good notes that your office can use to enhance the personal experience with that patient in future visits.

5

What are your long-term goals for your health, teeth and smile?

This is a great natural follow-up question 3 as it focuses the patient's attention on their long-term concerns. It also helps you prepare and present treatment to the patient. When both you and the patient understand the final destination, then the path becomes the focus. This alignment on their long-term goals and expectations helps you better overcome potential objections as you are simply presenting the best path to that destination.

7

Do you have a budget?

This question is vital. Don't shy away from it. Talking about finances is hard, but most patient objections stem back to some sort of financial constraint. Being open about finances from the beginning best establishes future conversations where price will play a key part.

9

What did your last dentist tell you?

This question gives pivotal context into their previous experiences with medical professionals and how it may have shaped their expectations (for better or worse). This question also helps identify whether or not the patient had previous objections to treatment, so when the time comes, you can better address your own treatment presentations.

6

Who else has input in this?

Many people can influence and factor into the decision making process. This question allows you to see who are the key stakeholders into potential treatment as well as those interested in the best outcome.

8

How soon would you like to be finished?

This question is another opportunity to understand the patient's expectations. Often the answers to this question help you understand if major treatment needs to be expedited or delayed. After all, there may be other factors impacting immediate care such as; kid(s) going to college so finances are tighter, upcoming big purchases such as home or cars, change in insurances or job uncertainty, etc.

10

How does that make you feel?

This question could and should be asked at various times of the new patient process. It will help give you more context regarding their motives, current anxieties about their health or events in their life, expectations of treatment, past experiences with medical professionals, etc. Utilize this question often. It invites patients to open up and be vulnerable, creating opportunities to establish better patient relationships and build trust.

How to implement the questions

These questions don't have to be sequential, or even exhaustive. Dive into them. Let the patient's answers inspire more questions. Dig deeper. When used correctly, these questions help you discover what the patient wants, their true needs, their expectations and their fears. Try to ask all of the questions. You never know which one is the winning question which inspires an answer that better establishes your relationship with them and prevents you from running into problems. It's always better to ask questions than make assumptions, for assumptions can lead to miscommunications, poor treatment presentations, or worse, cases that will come back to haunt you.

Do this properly and you will be able to increase treatment acceptance rates, exceed your patients' expectations and ultimately create outstanding patient engagement. To learn more about why these and other questions can improve treatment acceptance, visit drmarkspeaks.com/topics.



Another way to better understand your patients and boost treatment acceptance is by getting Weave. Our all-in-one platform makes connecting and communicating with patients easier than ever before. And, as we've established, better understanding your patients is the key to keeping them around, improving your treatment acceptance rates and bringing in more revenue for your business.

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