

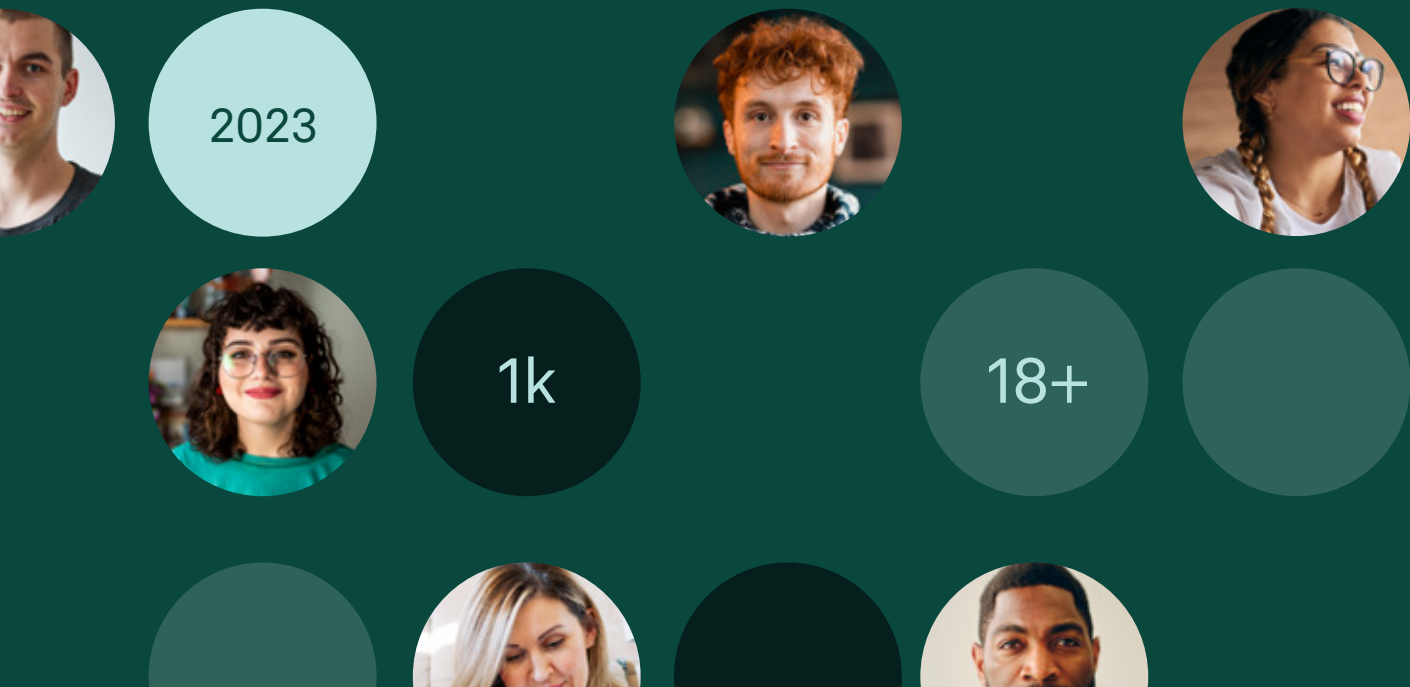
Better Communication Is Key to Managing Patient Anxiety

By Branden Neish



The rise of mental health struggles during the pandemic is no secret to healthcare professionals, but the lingering impact on patients continues to hinder their ability and desire to access care, a new survey finds. 30% of patients say anxiety has stopped them from scheduling a healthcare appointment in the last 12 months.

The survey was commissioned in March 2023 by Weave to 1,000 U.S. adults aged 18+ to find out if and how their mental health was affecting their physical wellbeing and relationship with healthcare providers. The results show younger generations are increasingly impacted by anxiety in their attempts to access healthcare, and that providers should explore different communication methods in order to connect with these groups.



The Anxiety Gap: Younger Generations, Women More Prone to Delay or Cancel Care

Weave's survey found that two groups in particular have a history of delaying or avoiding healthcare appointments due to anxiety – younger generations and women.

Millennials (41%) and Gen Z (40%) are more than two times more likely to claim that anxiety has stopped them from scheduling an appointment in the last 12 months, when compared to Baby Boomers (17%). When looking at the gender divide, women were twice as likely as men to have done the same.

So why are younger generations behaving differently than Gen X and Baby Boomers

and why are they more adversely impacted by anxiety? The economy could be a contributing factor.

38% of Gen Z and 34% of Millennials reported experiencing anxiety because of the price of treatments or services, as opposed to just 19% of Baby Boomers and 28% of Gen X. Financial stressors on younger generations have been well documented in the last year – rising home prices, dropping rates of homeownership, increased debt and lack of savings are making Gen Z and Millennials feel financially pinched in a way older generations are not.



2x

Millennials and Gen Z are more than two times more likely to claim that anxiety has stopped them from scheduling an appointment

Dental Appointments Drive the Most Anxiety, Patients Say

Dentophobia – also known as odontophobia, or fear of dentists – is still high among all generational groups. 68% of patients who reported feeling anxious before medical appointments said the dentist was their most anxiety-inducing appointment type, followed by primary care doctors.

Interestingly, there's hope for dentists that this fear could be lessening, as the kinds of healthcare appointments driving anxiety varied among the generational groups. Among Gen Z and Millennials, primary care appointments were the #1 kind of healthcare appointment driving anxiety.



68%

of patients who reported feeling anxious before medical appointments said the dentist was their most anxiety-inducing appointment type

How to Bridge the Gap: Tips for Providers & Office Staff

Above all, patients identified one significant change healthcare providers could make in helping them get back into the waiting room for appointments – better communication.

1 in 5 Gen Z (20%) & Millennials (20%) report lack of communication with a provider as a main contributor to anxiety, and a majority of patients (52%) believe that providers communicating what to expect before an appointment would make them feel more comfortable.

1 in 5

1 in 5 Gen Z (20%) & Millennials (20%) report lack of communication with a provider as a main contributor to anxiety



“

It has been my experience that contacting patients prior to their appointments reduces cancellations and no-shows,” says dental practice management expert Debra Engelhardt-Nash. “They appreciate the added connection, and post treatment communication shows genuine care. My clients see an increase in new patient treatment acceptance when they follow up with the patient after their visit. It’s an opportunity to address the questions and concerns the patient may have after they leave the office.”



Quality time with patients was also a popular method selected by patients to reduce anxiety. 51% of patients said providers taking time with them so that they do not feel rushed or unheard would help reduce anxiety, followed by better post-appointment follow ups to see how they're doing after the treatment or service received.

This creates a challenge for some healthcare providers—how do you provide more quality time with patients, while also doing more pre- and post-appointment communication. The two motions can leave providers feeling stretched thin.

Automation can be key to driving better patient experience and communication. Tools like [Online Scheduling](#), [Appointment Reminders](#) and [Digital Forms](#) can help ensure patients feel prepared for their visit before they step foot in the office.

Across all groups, 61% of patients said providers offering more digital solutions would make them feel less anxious before an appointment, and younger generations were even more emphatic on this. 75% of Gen Z and 71% of millennials said digital solutions would help them manage anxiety for healthcare appointments.



**To learn more about these features,
schedule a demo of Weave at
getweave.com/demo.**

Schedule a demo