

# Care Access Made Easy

A Guide to Digital Self-Service  
for Healthcare Organizations





# How to Implement End-to-End Capabilities with Provider Search, Online Scheduling, and Digital Check-In

Today's consumers expect digital self-service options when interacting with healthcare organizations just like the online interactions they have in other facets of their lives—including shopping, restaurant reservations, and scheduling a ride share service.

In addition to meeting consumer expectations, streamlining everyday tasks and manual processes with automation reduces the administrative burden on employees—enabling easier onboarding and freeing them up to focus on higher-value work.

While digital transformation can be complex, this guide breaks it down into a step-by-step approach. Each section in the guide comes with a helpful “crawl, walk, run” progression to help you move at your own pace through this process and scale operations when your organization is ready. The guide also includes real-world examples of healthcare organizations that have achieved success with each of these capabilities:



**Improved Search  
& Patient-Provider  
Matching**



**24-Hour Self-Service  
Online Consumer  
Scheduling**



**Expedited Digital  
Check-In & Payment**

# Improved Search & Patient-Provider Matching

Create a user-friendly provider directory on your website, enabling an accurate care match for consumers the first time.



## Did you know?

Over 80% of consumers visit two or more resources online when searching for care.<sup>2</sup> Presenting consistent, accurate provider and appointment information across access points is fundamental to guiding patients to the right care. Create a single source of truth for provider data to power these patient access experiences, and avoid poor patient-provider matches, and even delays in care.

Healthcare organization websites are a top resource for consumers searching for care online.<sup>1</sup> Your care search experience must offer key elements such as clinical keyword search, natural language processing (NLP) capabilities, and the ability to surface an array of care options including providers, locations, and services.

Avoid frustrating consumers with an outdated provider search experience that limits searches to provider name or specialty. Often, the only information patients have is the name of their symptom or condition (or the lay term for it). You can make their search easier if they can enter the few details they have and find accurate care matches in response.

## Real-World Results

**Inspira Health**, with three hospitals and 1,300+ providers, leveraged the out-of-the-box SEO capabilities, improving the volume of traffic to their find-a-provider significantly. In just six months, organic search traffic increased by 11 percentage points, with almost 60% of traffic to their find-a-provider experience now coming from organic search.<sup>3</sup>

# Improved Search & Patient-Provider Matching

## Crawl, Walk, Run Progression



### Crawl

Create a user-friendly find care experience on your website that seamlessly matches patients to the appropriate care for their needs.



- Provide an intuitive keyword search experience that allows patients to search by provider name, specialty, symptom, condition, or the lay terms/synonyms.
- Enable filtering of results based on patient priorities, such as the ability to schedule online, provider languages spoken, and insurance plans accepted.
- Ensure your provider directory, provider profiles, and service line pages are search engine optimized to help ensure new patients encounter your online presence first by surfacing higher in organic search results.

### Walk

Expand the array of care options available in the search experience so that patients have a variety of choices when selecting care.



- Include Advanced Practice Providers (APPs), such as physician assistants or nurse practitioners, and configure them to rank higher in search results for lower acuity cases.
- Add convenient care options such as urgent care centers and virtual visits—both scheduled and on-demand—into search results so that patients can see all of their options in one place.
- Display real-time appointment availability directly from the EHR in search results, allowing consumers to select the most timely and convenient choice for care.

### Run

Broaden your online reach so patients can easily find care with your organization—regardless of where they start their search.



- Incorporate care search into a chatbot or virtual assistant on your website so that patients who utilize this tool are seamlessly connected with the information they need.
- Enable staff and call center agents to support patients with the same intuitive care search experience so that the patient experience is the same whether they call in or go directly to your website.
- Syndicate rich, accurate data to third-party channels such as search engines, health plan directories, and more, so that patients who are searching for care on these other sites have a seamless experience.

# 24-Hour Self-Service Online Consumer Scheduling

Offer online self-scheduling to meet consumer demand for convenience and divert call volume so staff can focus on other high-value tasks.



## Did you know?

According to a recent study, 50% of patients failed to book an appointment on their first call into a healthcare organization.<sup>5</sup> Not only does this frustrate patients, but it can also result in additional calls, taking up more time and resources for agents and front desk staff. Offering online scheduling to complement this traditional channel, enables staff members to provide meaningful assistance to those who need it for more complex cases.

Many consumers prefer to schedule healthcare appointments online over other methods. In fact, 80% of millennials scheduled their last appointment online.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, offering online scheduling gives consumers the flexibility to book appointments when it's convenient for them, even if that happens outside of normal business hours when offices or call centers are closed.

Today's healthcare organizations continue to face staff shortages and high call volumes are leaving patients frustrated. Organizations may consider utilizing technology, such as online scheduling, to help ease some of the burden.

## Real-World Results

**Northeast Georgia Health System**, comprising four hospitals and 1,200+ providers, initially launched online scheduling for primary care only, and later expanded to include specialty providers. In the first six months, over 2,000 appointments were booked online (with no marketing), 75% of which were for new patients.<sup>6</sup>

# 24-Hour Self-Service Online Consumer Scheduling

## Crawl, Walk, Run Progression



### Crawl

Launch online scheduling with a pre-determined cohort of providers so that you can build momentum and replicate success as you expand.



- Prove the value by starting with a smaller subset, such as primary care providers (PCPs). A “champion” group’s success makes it easier to scale to other specialties.
- Know that 96% of providers say they are interested in online scheduling, however, a major hesitation is that they will lose control over their own schedules.<sup>7</sup>
- Engage providers as stakeholders and get their buy-in during this process, giving them input to build trust and reassurance that they will see the right types of patients and keep their schedule intact.

### Walk

Expand online scheduling to additional appointment types and specialty providers that are in high demand.



- Educate other provider groups about the success seen with your primary care providers who are seeing the right patient types on their schedules.
- Open online scheduling to key specialties as you gain their buy-in and reduce their hesitancy.
- Consider adding pre-booking validation questions for certain appointment types that have age or other restrictions, such as pediatric appointments or mammograms, to ensure that patients are appropriately scheduling care.

### Run

Now that your providers have seen success, consider further expanding the options that are available for self-scheduling.



- Expand your capabilities to make certain services schedulable online, such as flu shots and mammograms, further meeting consumer demand for convenience.
- Promote these services with a marketing campaign, e.g., prior to flu season or during breast cancer awareness month to drive greater awareness.
- Enable patients to schedule appointments with your providers directly from certain third-party sites, such as health plans. Nearly 80% of consumers noted in a recent survey that they would schedule appointments this way if given the option.<sup>8</sup>



# Expedited Digital Check-In & Payment

Enable patients to check-in and make payments at their convenience, significantly reducing the administrative burden on front-desk staff.



## Did you know?

Many organizations see as high as 8x ROI after implementing digital check-in.<sup>10</sup> Benefits include reduced staff burden, increased time-of-service collections, accurate patient forms and medication lists that automatically update in the EHR, and more.

Self-service options are top of mind for consumers, with over 85% interested in completing tasks such as providing pre-visit information, making payments, providing insurance information, and confirming coverage through digital self-service.<sup>9</sup> Extend the self-service experience by offering patients the opportunity to complete these tasks before they arrive for their appointment.

Offering patients this option ensures they'll provide the key information you need to deliver high quality care and alleviates administrative staff burden as they no longer need to manually enter this information into the EHR.

## Real-World Results

**Shore Physicians Group**, comprising nine locations and 60+ providers, averages nearly 2,000 check-in screener completions and over 6,700 document uploads per month—without any staff involvement. They've also increased time-of-service collections by 37% since utilizing digital check-in and payments.<sup>11</sup>

# Expedited Digital Check-In & Payment

## Crawl, Walk, Run Progression



### Crawl

Launch digital check-in and payment to offer more self-service opportunities to patients and reduce staff burden.



- Capture important patient intake information ahead of the visit, such as medical history and medication lists, freeing up staff from having to manually input this information.
- Update patient charts automatically, saving valuable clinical time during the visit—all integrated with the EHR.
- Increase outstanding balance collection by offering payment options at the time of digital check-in, making it easy for patients to manage payments through a single experience.

### Walk

Add custom content into the check-in process, so that patients receive targeted promotions from your hospital or practice as they go through the process.



- Promote services like flu shots and preventative screenings to bring awareness to these offerings, especially at certain times of the year.
- Highlight new locations, services, or providers to keep patients up-to-date on their care options with your organization.
- Surface targeted content that is relevant to specific patient cohorts, based on a variety of different factors such as appointment type or age e.g., promote mammogram screenings for women over 40.

### Run

Expand your digital patient intake capabilities with arrival management—reducing the need for clipboards and manual data entry.



- Allow patients to indicate that they've arrived for their appointment using their personal devices or a provided tablet or kiosk, avoiding a queue at the front desk.
- Enable patients to complete the check-in process digitally if they have not done so already, to further reduce burden on your front desk staff.
- Save front desk staff time and streamline patient wait times avoiding frustrated patients due to an over-crowded reception area.



# Care Access Made Easy: Step-by-Step Guide to Digital Self-Service

## SEARCH

### Crawl

Create a user-friendly find care experience on your website that seamlessly matches patients to the appropriate care for their needs.

### Walk

Expand the array of care options available in the search experience to include Advanced Practice Providers (APPs), virtual visits, and more.

### Run

Broaden your online reach so patients can easily find care with your organization—regardless of where they start their search.

## SCHEDULE

### Crawl

Launch online scheduling with a pre-determined cohort of providers so that you can build momentum and replicate success as you expand.

### Walk

Expand online scheduling to additional appointment types and specialty providers that are in high demand.

### Run

Add imaging and other services such as flu shots to online scheduling. Once these services are live, launch a marketing campaign to promote them, e.g., prior to flu season.

## CHECK-IN AND PAYMENT

### Crawl

Launch digital check-in and payment to offer more self-service opportunities to patients and reduce staff burden.

### Walk

Add custom content into the check-in process, so that patients receive targeted promotions from your hospital or practice as they go through the process.

### Run

Enable patients to indicate that they've arrived at their appointment using their personal devices or a provided tablet/kiosk, avoiding a queue and saving front desk staff time.

## Sources

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