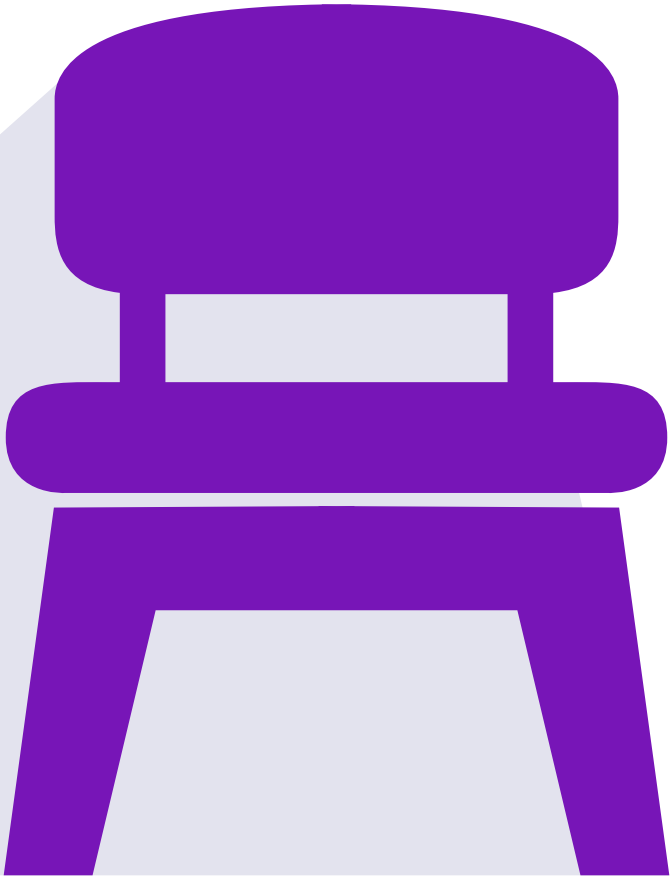
artera™

Reducing Patient No-Show Rates

A Comprehensive Guide





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Introduction



High patient no-show rates have a negative impact on healthcare. They damage provider revenue, and they prevent patients from receiving optimal care – a serious lose-lose.

Patient no-show rates vary greatly across the U.S. healthcare system, ranging from 5.5% to 50%. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly contributed to this rate and even as hospitals and practices embraced telehealth to provide care during the pandemic, patients still missed telehealth appointments due to a number of challenges, including technical issues or not acknowledging telehealth as a "real" doctor's appointment.

According to a study published by the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), patient no-show rates can reach as high as 80% in problematic areas where multiple factors that drive patients to miss appointments are present. Patient no-show rates soar for a variety of reasons — logistics, emotional barriers, or sometimes simply just forgetting.

A central cause of no-shows is patients lacking a convenient and easy way to communicate with their doctors. Many providers still force patients to pick up the phone, or use clunky portals. They fail to offer them a digital medium that is easy, convenient, and multilingual. However, it's been proven that when providers improve their patient communication methods, no-show rates do decrease.

How can providers implement the right strategies to reduce no-show rates?

And what results can they expect? *Read on to find out.*

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THE COST of Patient No-Shows



Here's an all too familiar scenario:

A medical staff member calls out a name in a packed waiting room. Visibly impatient people look up, but no-one answers. The staff member calls out the name again. Silence again. The name is crossed out.

This is a no-show.

A patient has failed to show up for an appointment and didn't cancel that appointment ahead of time. This happens thousands of times every single day. No-show patients have been a headache for many healthcare practices, large or small, and it's been a longstanding, ongoing problem.

Whenever a patient doesn't appear for a check-up, surgery, or consultation, it leads to wasted capacity. Personnel, resources, and expertise that have been scheduled for that particular appointment are underutilized, and the slot goes empty. Unlike a cancellation, where staff could backfill the appointment, a no-show is lost revenue.

For providers, these ill effects translate directly to a damaged bottom line.

BAD FOR PATIENTS

- Interrupted continuity of care
- Poorer clinical outcomes
- Unmonitored medication use
- Delayed preventive screenings

BAD FOR PROVIDERS

- Unspent labor is still paid labor, typically ranging from 50% to 60% of total operating revenue.

- A shortage of doctors and other medical personnel forces healthcare practices to overstaff. Their ever-increasing salaries, combined with high no-show rates, further drive down revenue.

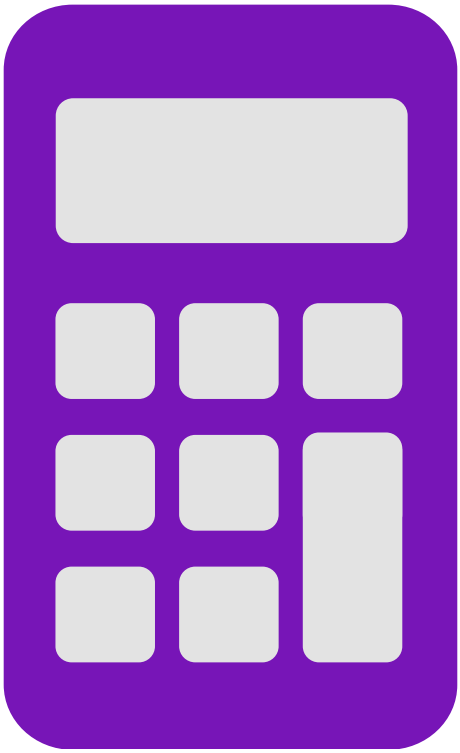
- Overstaffing contributes to employee disengagement and turnover. Several healthcare organizations have seen an 18% dive in productivity and as much as 16% loss in profitability.

- No-shows add more administrative burden to staff who are tasked with scheduling and appointments. As the list of patients to call grows, the operational expenses required for calling patients and making follow-ups also increase.

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BREAKING DOWN

Patient No-Show Costs



Patient no-show rates vary greatly across the U.S. healthcare system, ranging from 5% to 30% nationwide. (The global average for patient no-show rate is 23%, according to the National Library of Medicine).

Data from the Physicians Foundation revealed that U.S. doctors see 20 patients daily. However, when many patients fail to show up, the result is significant revenue leakage.

One missed appointment can cost a provider $200 to $265. Across the U.S. healthcare system, **an average loss of $200 per appointment translates to $150 billion every year**. In a $3.5 trillion industry, every missed appointment represents a significant amount of lost revenue for healthcare systems. And despite what some patients think, skipping an appointment doesn't free up time in a provider's schedule — it creates more administrative work for staff and prevents other patients from getting the care they need.

For managed care and services that receive monthly fixed fees from their clients, they can't pass along the additional costs of services and administration. When clients don't show up, due to multiple personal reasons including financial issues, lack of transportation, and lack of time off from work, the impact of the loss of revenue is intensified because of the extra expenses.

It's critical for healthcare providers to empower patients to show up to their appointments. Not only will it stop financial bleeding, more patients appearing for their check-ups and procedures can generate millions of revenue. The NCBU study shows that reducing the no-show rate to 5% would increase revenue by nearly $51.8 million annually across the U.S. healthcare system.

HOW TO CALCULATE YOUR PATIENT NO-SHOW RATE

To calculate your no-show rate, divide the number of no-shows by the total number of weekly appointments. For example, if your practice typically sees 100 patients each week, and you have 20 no-shows, your no-show rate is 20 divided by 100, or 20 percent.

No-show rate calculation results will differ for everyone, but the national average no-show rate is roughly 18 percent. During the COVID-19 pandemic, patient no-show rates soared across the U.S. healthcare network, and in some clinics, the figure rose to 36.1%.

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Poor Provider-Patient COMMUNICATIONS

Some of the causes of no-shows are hard to mitigate:

People are busy and forgetful; public transportation and the weather also play a role. However, there is one big area where providers can actively slash patient no-show rates. U.S. research has shown that up to 31.5% of no-shows are due to poor provider communications.

Fragmented communication between patients and providers, as well as outdated practices for managing patient preferences for appointment reminders, are among the leading drivers of high no-show rates among providers.

To fix this, healthcare practices need to start making the whole appointment scheduling journey as seamless and friendly as possible. Modern patients want communication with their providers to deliver the same things they expect from the consumer products they use in their everyday lives: convenience, value, and innovation.

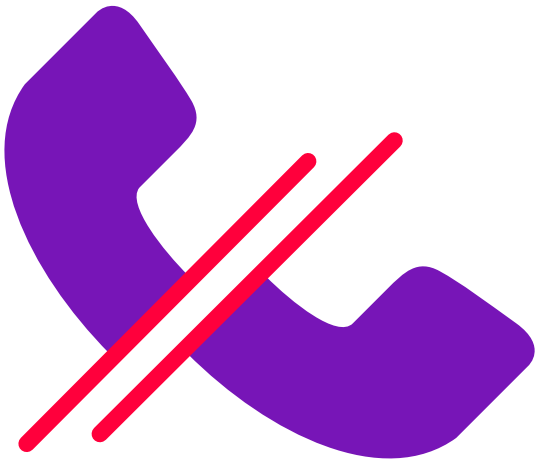
Strategies to reduce no-show rates must also consider language barriers and how to address them. According to the National Library of Medicine, among non-proficient English speaking patients who received professional medical treatment, 50% said their inability to understand the local language contributed to errors, 30% struggled to understand medical instructions, and 20% did not pursue healthcare services if they were not readily available.

66%

of patients reported provider communication is incomplete.

59%

of patients reported they are willing to switch doctors if they are provided with a broken communications experience.



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Patients Want Reminders & Rescheduling BY TEXT

There are two major things that can immediately cut patient no-show rates:

1. **Texting appointment reminders to patients**
2. **Offering patients the option of self-rescheduling by text**

Notice the common denominator? **Texting.**

Texting, while not a new communication platform, is the most widely used messaging medium in the U.S. Currently, there are approximately 307 million smartphone users in the U.S.

Texting also enables providers to quickly fill in canceled slots, ensuring revenue is still generated, and patients are serviced.

85%
of American adults use smartphones

98%
is the open rate for texting.

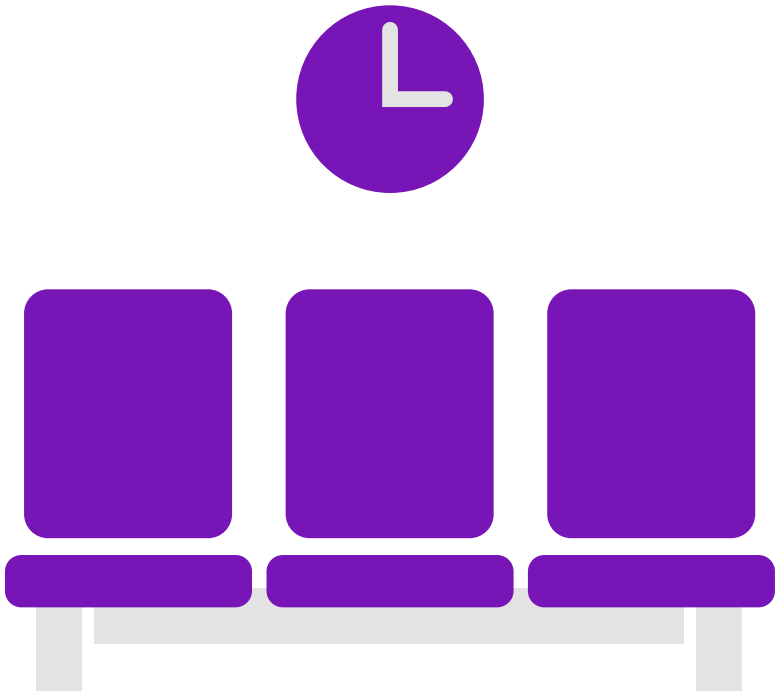
91%
want to be informed about the status of their ill loved ones via text.

70%
of American healthcare consumers prefer texting to schedule their appointments.

83%
like to receive reminders from physicians for prescriptions, schedule confirmations, follow-up appointments, and more.

55%
of respondents in one consumer survey said they would reply to text reminders to confirm or cancel their appointments as well as ask for additional details from their physicians.

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8 STRATEGIES

to Reduce Patient No-Show Rates

Understanding why your patients are missing their appointments is essential to finding solutions to reduce no-shows. As discussed, poor patient communications are a key cause of missed appointments that can be remedied through digital communications such as texting. Providing patients with multiple, convenient communication options that are automated, bidirectional, conversational, and in a language of their choosing are all other effective ways of addressing no-show problems.

Here are 8 strategies that offer both immediate and long-term solutions you can implement to reduce your health system's no-show rate.

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1

Use the patient's preferred method of contact

Patients of all ages now use technology in every facet of their lives and expect more than robo-dialers, or one-way email and text systems from their providers. They want the convenience of choosing their preferred channel to communicate whether it be text messaging, phone, or email. Ask your patients their preferred method of contact for appointment reminders and other types of patient outreach.



2

Help patients understand the need for the appointment

One reason patient no-show rates remain high is that patients don't understand the purpose of the visit. Only 12 percent of U.S. adults have proficient health literacy, and a staggering 77 million adults have basic or below basic health literacy. This results in patients not adhering to treatment plans — including attending their scheduled visits. One of the effective strategies to reduce no-show rates is to make information and health education accessible to patients, particularly in complex medical situations. In addition, providers can also communicate instructions and information via texting prior to a visit or procedure to help patients prepare and empower them to show up to their doctor's office. Research published in the journal, Medscape General Medicine, recommend five steps for changing patient beliefs and behavior as they relate to following treatment plans and attending appointments.

Educate your patients so they:

1. Recognize the risk of not adopting a healthy behavior
2. Perceive their condition as serious
3. Believe in the positive effects of the suggested treatment
4. Can address their fears and concerns
5. Believe they can complete the treatment plan

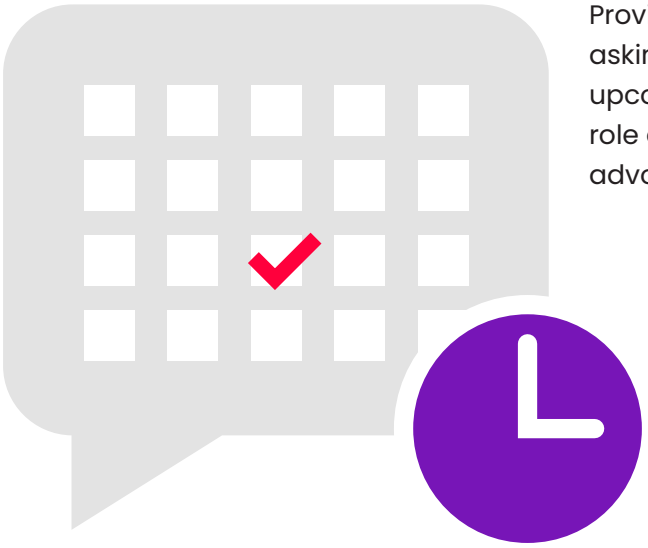
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3

Use automated patient appointment reminders

Perhaps the most effective strategy, and arguably the simplest for reducing patient no-show rates, is to send appointment reminders. Automated appointment reminders help bring down patient no-show rates and boost appointment confirmations. Leveraging automated text reminders will ultimately increase patient attendance via better scheduling and slot utilization.

Conducting outreach through text and email has huge potential to reduce missed appointments. Text appointment reminders that are bidirectional — meaning patients can text you back — give patients a chance to confirm their appointment, get directions, ask questions, and adequately prepare for their appointment.



4

Calm patient fears

Another way to reduce no-show appointments is to calm your patients and address their fears. Fear fuels patient no-show rates since patients may fear bad test results, getting on the scale, or uncomfortable procedures. Whatever the reason, fear keeps patients from following through with their scheduled appointments. "Many people feel anxious because they fear the unknown, and they let their imagination run wild," said psychologist Dr. Barbara Cox in an interview with NBC's health site, Better. "They may imagine a worst-case scenario, when in fact going for an annual check-up is the best prevention."

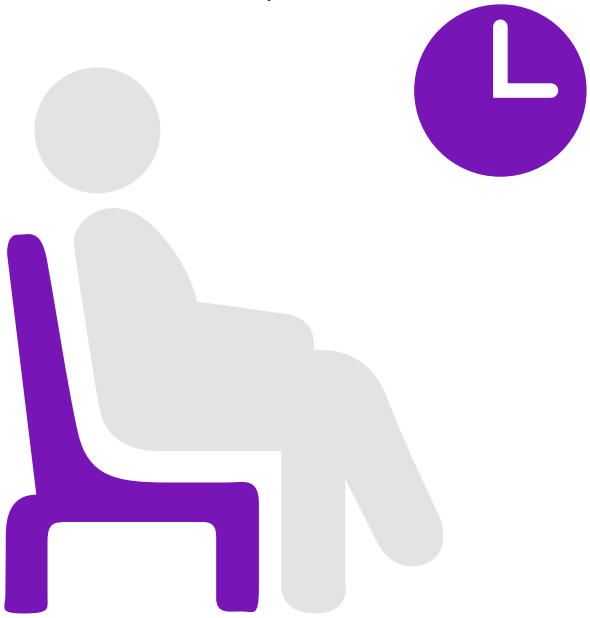
Addressing the fear factor is a big step in reducing no-show appointments. Cox recommends providers help patients to acknowledge their anxiety before a visit. Providers can initiate this conversation by asking patients how they feel about an upcoming test or visit and reinforcing their role as not only a provider but also, an advocate and an ally.

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5

Reduce the time between scheduling an appointment and the actual appointment

Cut down the waiting time for your patients to get an appointment. Whether it's reducing no-show rates in primary care or in specialized practice, patients want faster access to doctors, information, and medical services. Spending a significant amount of time in between appointments waiting to see their doctor can be a frustrating experience. The longer the time in between scheduling an appointment and the actual appointment, the more likely the patient is a no-show. Unfortunately, the problem is a bit of a chicken-and-egg scenario. Long wait times to see a provider increases no-shows, and no-shows contribute to longer wait times for other patients.



6

Offer digital check-in and updates on scheduling issues

Healthcare consumers are busy people, so asking them to repeatedly wait long periods of time before an appointment may turn them into no-shows. Eventually, they may also become a lost patient if they find another provider who they perceive values their time.

To save administrative time, many providers are continuing virtual waiting rooms practices created during the COVID pandemic or operating a hybrid version. Offering a touchless or digital check-in process will allow patients to pre-register and complete any screenings or paperwork before their appointments. For up-to-date information, bidirectional texting allows patients and the medical staff to quickly communicate if there are any scheduling or time issues.

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7

Text patients to reschedule

Proactively reach out to patients after they missed an appointment with an invitation to self-reschedule or be added to an automated waitlist. Encourage them to text back or contact the office staff if they have additional questions or need assistance.

8

Send follow-up messages

Automating thank you messages to show your patients appreciation for keeping their appointments acknowledges their time is valuable and helps build patient loyalty. You can also include additional information in the post-appointment thank-you message for referrals, medication, and any other types of follow-up.



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How Artera Improves Patient-Provider COMMUNICATIONS

Artera™ reliably cuts patient no-show rates by equipping healthcare providers with a sophisticated and centralized communication hub that simplifies patient-provider communication. From a unified platform, providers can engage patients in one-on-one, back-and-forth text conversations at scale.

The Artera platform eliminates communication issues stemming from outdated, rigid phone systems and other one-way communication tools. Providers can tailor their messages based on their patient's profile, previous interactions, and current treatment plan. Personalized messaging empowers patients to become more engaged and involved with their health, thus contributing to the reduction of patient no-show rates.



Conversational Text Messaging Between Patients and Providers

Patients can get in touch and exchange text messages with their providers through the device that is central to their life: their cellphone. (Artera also supports email, patient portals, and voice calls.)



Multilingual Support

A key cause of no-show patients are language issues, which Artera can easily resolve. The hub is designed to support over 100 different languages. Artera can automatically translate messages to patients' preferred languages, helping providers build rapport and strengthen relationships.



Broadcast Messaging

To help fill slots when patients do cancel, Artera empowers healthcare providers to send customized messages to up to 1,000 patients, informing them of available slots to ensure all slots are utilized.



Secure Messaging

The Artera system is also designed to protect patient information through secure messaging protocols. All messages are secure and require patients to verify their identity prior to viewing the content of their messages.



Pre-Visit Prep

Beyond automatic custom appointment reminders, ensure your patients are well-prepared for their appointments by automating procedure instructions, consent forms, and more — empowering them to come to their appointment fully prepared.



Post-Visit Actions

Ensure patient engagement and adherence to health plans by utilizing automated post-discharge communication, follow-up for missed appointments (with a self-rescheduling option) and outreach for prescriptions and pharmacy needs.

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The Artera Impact

Case Studies

Community Memorial Health System

[Community Memorial Health System (CMHS)] is a large healthcare system that had a legacy appointment reminder system that didn't allow patients to respond. Every day, CMHS staff had to call patients to remind them of their appointments. But after using Artera for two months, CMHS saw immediate results.

CMHS's no-show rate dropped by 29 percent, resulting in an estimated $1,169,600 increase in annual revenue.

"It became obvious to us very early that (Artera) was going to eliminate a lot of work... and it did." - Lori Hooks, Director of Quality and Practice Systems.

EISENHOWER HEALTH

Located in Coachella Valley, CA, health system [Eisenhower Health] grappled with high call volume. Staff spent as much as two hours on the phone each day dealing with appointment reminders yet patients were still frequently no-shows. Eisenhower Health had to find a way to decrease no-shows to maintain revenue. After using Artera, the staff saw the time they spent on the phone drop from as much as two hours to as low as 15 minutes.

With Artera, Eisenhower Health saw a 40% reduction in no-shows and a 23% growth in appointment confirmations.

With all the extra time, Mark Steffen Chief Administrative Officer, Primary and Specialty Care Clinics said, "We can focus our care team on more patient-focused activities and follow-up."

TIBURCIO VASQUEZ Health Center

The [Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center (TVHC)] caters to 115,000 patients, a large proportion of which are Hispanic. The language barrier was making it difficult for TVHC physicians to connect with such a large volume of patients, resulting in high patient no-show rates and lost revenue. By implementing Artera, TVHC overcame the language barrier issue.

TVHC saw its no-show rate drop by 20%. Confirmed bookings skyrocketed from 25% to 80%.

Artera "has given us a better way to talk to our patients, an easier, more efficient way to reach out to patients, and a better way to handle scheduling," said Caleb Sandford, TVHC Chief Operations Officer.

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ABOUT ARTERA

Artera is a SaaS digital health leader redefining patient communications. Artera is trusted by 800+ healthcare systems and federal agencies to facilitate approximately 2 billion communications annually, reaching 100+ million patients. The Artera platform integrates across a healthcare organization's tech stack, EHRs and third-party vendors to unify, simplify and orchestrate digital communications into the patient's preferred channel (texting, email, IVR, and webchat), in 109+ languages. The Artera impact: more efficient staff, more profitable organizations and a more harmonious patient experience.

Founded in 2015, Artera is based in Santa Barbara, California and has been named a Deloitte Technology Fast 500 company (2021, 2022, 2023), and ranked on the Inc. 5000 list of fastest-growing private companies for five consecutive years. Artera is a two-time Best in KLAS winner in Patient Outreach.

Learn more:

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