



# THE COMPLETE SEO GUIDE FOR HEALTHCARE PRACTITIONERS

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## Why you need to care about SEO

You've probably heard that you need to include SEO – search engine optimization – in the online marketing strategy for your healthcare practice. SEO refers to the process of increasing your website's ranking on search engine results pages (SERPS). The higher your website appears on a results page, the more people see it and click on it.

It's easy to pass off SEO as being too technical or complex and focus instead on other marketing tactics, such as creating a website, establishing social media or writing a blog. While a website, social media and blog posts can engage and convert people into patients, that content won't be effective at all if patients can't see it. People also tend to assume that effective SEO only requires adding a bunch of relevant keywords to your website. Relevant keywords are an important part of boosting your SEO, but SEO is a much richer process than simply inserting keywords into your website copy.

Effective SEO combines the use of your website, content, link structure, photo tagging, thoughtful keyword use, relevant social media posts, analytics and more to get your practice in front of the right patients. If your practice isn't visible to the right patients online – the ones who will buy from you – your practice will never grow. Plus, using SEO effectively makes getting your online presence up and running worth all of that time, money and energy.



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## What you can expect in this ebook

The fact that you're reading this ebook demonstrates your commitment to setting consistent growth goals for your practice and providing the best healthcare possible. You have the passion and drive to create positive change in your field and in patients' lives; we'll help you reach as many patients as possible with strategic SEO practices.

This ebook gives you the SEO knowledge and tools you can use right away to make your practice stand out to patients so that they see you – and choose you first – during their online searches.



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## Setting up your website for SEO success

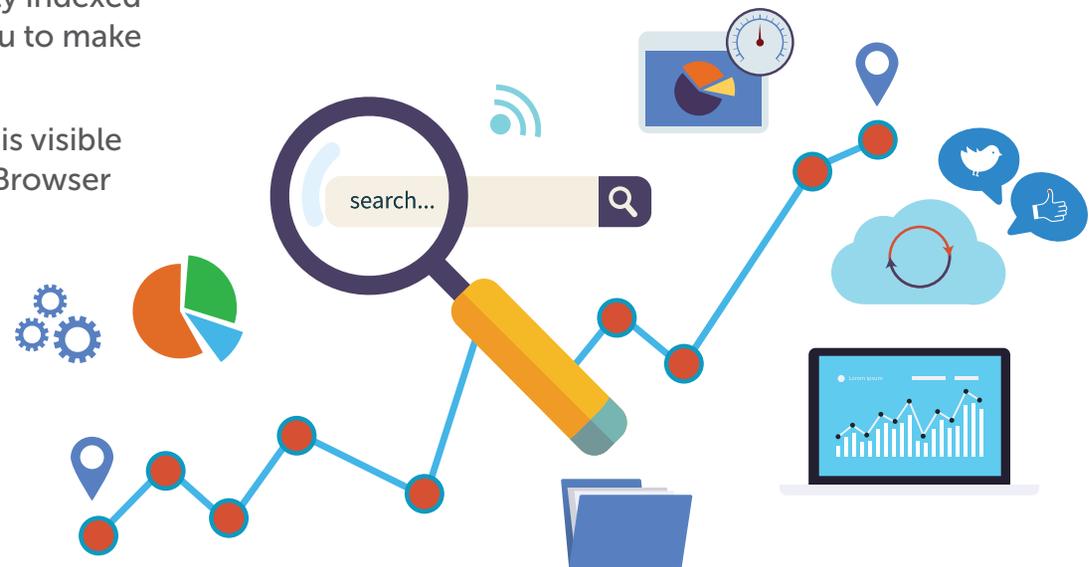
The best way to make sure that search engines can find you online is to put your website content in HTML text format. Using HTML format is crucial because it's indexable, meaning that your content will be collected and stored by search engines, which helps ensure that your website appears on results pages. Non-text content, such as images, flash files and content in Java format, are not easily picked up by search engines; in fact, content in those formats is often ignored. To get the best visibility possible, put your content in HTML text on the web page.

In 2015, Google estimated that the Internet contains about 5 million terabytes of data, but it has only indexed 0.04% of it. There's a HUGE opportunity for you to make your content visible to Google.

A great way to ensure that your HTML content is visible to search engines is to use tools, such as SEO Browser and Google's Cache Checker. If a good chunk of your text doesn't appear, it's a sign that your text formatting needs to change.

To get your content into HTML, try these tips:

- Write a transcript of video or audio content you post on a web page. Search engines will find your transcript in HTML format.
- If you installed Flash or Java plug-ins on a web page, make sure to also include HTML text.
- For images in gif, jpg or png format, add captions to provide a textual description.



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## Can search engines actually find your content?

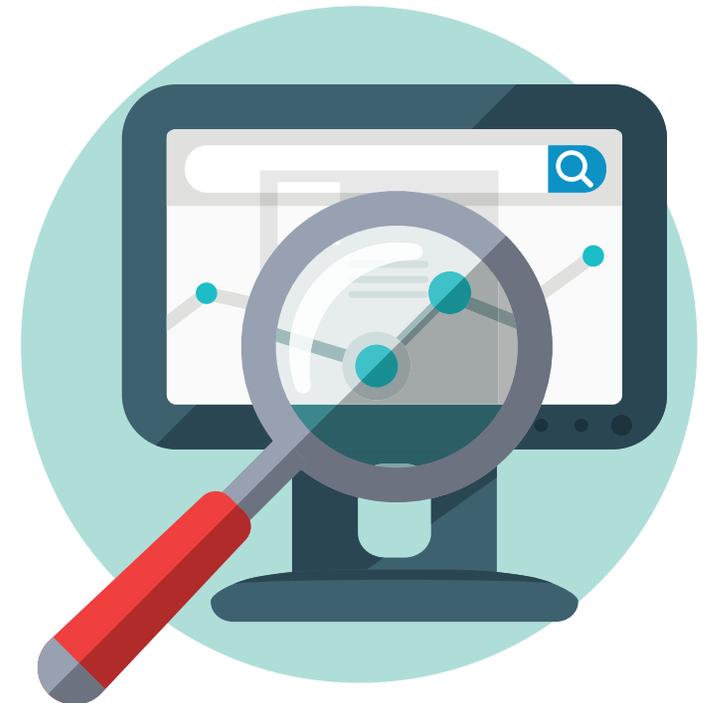
Aside from making sure that your content is readable to search engines so that they can index it, you also have to make sure that search engines can find your content in the first place. Search engines use “spiders” to read and index website content, and spiders must be able to “crawl” your website easily through the use of link structures that make all of your web pages accessible. If there are no direct, crawlable links to each of your web pages, spiders will not be able to find them. They’ll assume those pages don’t exist and they won’t include them in search results pages.

The best way to create clear pathways in your website is to establish internal links to all of your pages. Internal links refer to links that point your visitors to another page on your website. Using internal links helps visitors navigate your website easily, establish a clear architecture for spiders to follow and index and help boost your ranking on search results pages.

Here’s how internal links work. Let’s say you’re browsing a website called Best Doctor Ever. The home page would look like this: [www.bestdoctorever.com](http://www.bestdoctorever.com).

On the home page, there may be a link called “About Us” to learn the history of the practice. This is an internal link and it would look like this: [www.bestdoctorever.com/aboutus/](http://www.bestdoctorever.com/aboutus/).

From that page, visitors may have the option of learning about individual physicians who practice at Best Doctor Ever by clicking a link called “Our Physicians.” This internal link would look like: [www.bestdoctorever.com/aboutus/ourphysicians/](http://www.bestdoctorever.com/aboutus/ourphysicians/).



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## Can search engines actually find your content?

See how all of the links are connected? The Best Doctor Ever website creates a clear pathway of internal links through which search engines can crawl and index all of the content so that it appears on results pages.

When programming your website, make sure your internal links are in this structure:

```
<a href="http://www.bestdoctorever.com">About Us</a>
```

```
<a href="http://www.bestdoctorever.com/About Us"> Our Physicians</a>
```

For the content that you want to appear on search engine results pages, use HTML links instead of Javascript links. Spiders typically can't access links embedded in Flash, Java applets or other plug-ins, so content in those links probably won't appear on results pages.



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The correct way to  
find and use

# keywords for SEO

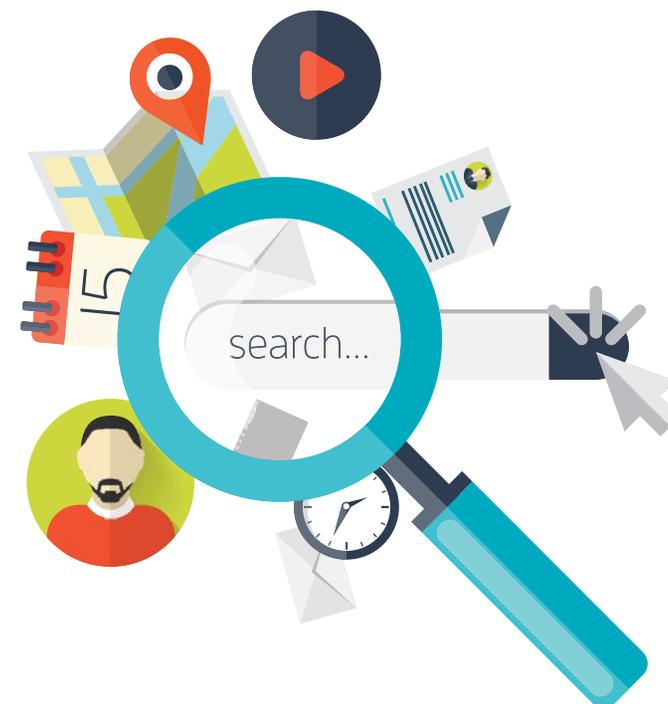


## The correct way to find and use keywords for SEO

When people think about SEO, they usually think about keywords, or the terms that people enter in search engines when performing a search. Many people think that all they have to do is find the keywords their target market uses and insert them wherever they can into their online content. But keyword use is more complex than that.

How do you know which keywords to use in your online content so that your website ranks highly on results pages? Conduct keyword research. Use these steps, adapted from Hubspot, to conduct your keyword research:

1. Create a list of five to ten of the most important and common topics that you discuss with your current patients – or people who cold-call your practice for more information. What do patients ask you about all the time? What information are they really interested in? If you have a blog, what topics do you write about frequently? Put yourself in the shoes of your target market. What terms would they search for online that you would want your practice to be found for? For example, if you have a dental practice, maybe your main topics include: dental insurance, cosmetic procedures, oral surgery and pediatric dentistry.
2. Identify keywords/phrases that fall under those main topics. Gather a group of colleagues and brainstorm keywords and phrases that people would enter into a search engine that relate to each topic. From the example above, maybe the keywords that fall under “cosmetic procedures” include teeth whitening, dental implants, veneers, cosmetic dental procedures cost, cosmetic dental procedures near me, and before and after. Don’t get tripped up about this list; just do a brain dump with your colleagues about any terms that your target market may search. Repeat this exercise for all of the main topics you created in Step 1.



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## The correct way to find and use keywords for SEO

6. Narrow your list with data. Use Google AdWords Keyword Planner (you don't need to create an ad; just set up the account) to search the volume and traffic estimates of the keywords on your list. The Keyword Planner will help you maintain that balance of head terms and long-tail terms by flagging keywords with too much or too little traffic. Google Trends shows you trend history and projections of your keywords so that you don't remove something you should invest in now to reap the benefits later.
7. Reevaluate your keywords three to four times per year. As your SEO improves and you move up on search results pages, you'll be able to add more keywords to grow.

Now that you have your list of keywords that will appeal to your target audience, it's time to input those words into your website copy, social media, blog posts and image captions and tags.

Instead of stuffing keywords into every possible area in your website (which will get you penalized by Google with a lower SEO ranking and which make you look unprofessional to visitors), integrate the keywords naturally into your content. Don't force a keyword into your writing; use it as a natural part of your conversation with your audience. As you write your content with keywords, if something reads awkwardly to you, it will read awkwardly to your audience, prompting them to jump from your practice to your competitor.



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## The correct way to find and use keywords for SEO

While your keywords need to appear naturally in your content, make sure that they definitely appear in the following:

- Title of web pages
- Article/blog topic title
- Anchor text (in your links)
- First paragraph of text on a page
- Meta descriptions

When you integrate keywords into your website, they also need to be grammatically correct. For example, if one of your keywords or phrases is: "plastic surgeons Denver," you do not input that exact phrase into a page on your website. Rather, you would say, "Dr. Smith is a plastic surgeon who practices in Denver."

Bottom line? Sprinkle your keywords throughout your website so that you sound like you're having a natural conversation with a prospective patient.



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## Cash in on local SEO

In 2015, four out of five consumers used search engines to look up a local business. 50% of consumers who searched for a local business on their phones visited the store within 24 hours. And 34% of consumers who looked up a business on their computer or tablet visited that business within 24 hours. The facts speak for themselves. There is ample opportunity for you to cash in on local SEO.

Here's what you need to know to show patients that you're in their area and get them to come to you:

1. Spread your NAP. NAP refers to your business' name, physical address and phone number. Make sure you have one consistent name, address and number. Then go to major review sites and claim your listing. Set up an account on Google+, Yelp, Healthgrades, Bing, Yahoo, Facebook and Manta. If an account has been set up for you, submit a request to become the administrator of your account so you have full control of your NAP.
2. Post on social media. Set up accounts on sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to engage customers. Make sure to use your keywords when you post, e.g. "pediatric dentist serving families in Washington, DC" or "We love teaching kids in DC about brushing their teeth!" Make sure you put your NAP on your social media accounts so search engines pick it up. The more followers and engagement you have, the higher your website will appear on results pages.
3. Get online reviews. When patients write a review of your practice and post it on a review site like Yelp or Healthgrades, search engines will pick that up and give you a higher ranking. And since most consumers use online reviews to make decisions about where to spend their money, you'll attract new patients, too. Send an automatic email to patients after their appointment asking them to write a review about their experience at your practice. Entice patients to write a review by entering them into a raffle if they post one. Remember to respond to all reviews to maintain engagement with patients – even if the review is negative.
4. Go to the media. Develop relationships with local bloggers, writers and news outlets. Tell them about a charity event you and your practice hosted. Entice them to come to your practice with a special offer on one of your services. Get the media to cover your practice in some way. Local news coverage can drive more patients your way.



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## Don't forget about images and SEO

It's easy to overlook the effect that images on your website have on your SEO. But images are like tiny web pages within each page of your website. You have to optimize them with the right URL structure, tags and captions to get them indexed by spiders.

Use the tips below to make your images SEO-friendly:

1. Find relevant images. Images make your web pages more interesting and attractive, so choose them wisely. The images you place on your web pages should match the surrounding content. This will reinforce to search engines that you're not spamming them. Go to [creativecommons.com](https://creativecommons.com) to find images that do not require a license to use. Also check out [stock.xchng.com](https://stock.xchng.com) and [iStockPhoto.com](https://iStockPhoto.com).
2. When naming your image files, use keywords. Go back to that list of targeted keywords you created in Chapter 3. After selecting images, change their generic file name – which doesn't add to any of the useful information on your web page – to something like "kids brushing teeth." This is a much more specific, relevant name that search engines will recognize.
3. Save image files in the right format. Use the jpeg, gif, png or bmp formats to save your images. These are common image file types that search engines can understand and index.
4. Write captions. While search engine spiders are very smart, they don't have the capability to pick up the text content of images. Instead, they rely on captions, file names and surrounding text to determine how to index images. Help out the spiders by writing a short caption – with a keyword – under your images.
5. Use the right anchor text. If you want to include a link to an image, you need to use relevant anchor text, or the visible/clickable text in a link. For example, do not say, "See photo." Instead, say, "See some of our staff helping kids brush their teeth," and make "kids brush their teeth" the clickable anchor text.



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## Your Next Step

We're excited for you to use these tips, improve your SEO and see results! But here's the thing. This ebook is just a starting point. There's a lot more to know about SEO and a lot more you can do to really skyrocket the success of your practice. So, if you're ready to achieve more in your practice, then email us/call us now for a FREE Search Engine Optimization Assessment. We'll review your SEO, talk to you about your growth goals and create a plan of action to get you seen in search engine results.

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