

Managing the Chaos in Your Waiting Room

13 Ways to Satisfy Your Patients While They Wait



Introduction

Waiting rooms can be stressful places to spend any amount of time. Just ask anyone who has worked in a busy healthcare facility. The nature of checking in and sitting down to wait often causes anxiety and uncertainty for your patients who, more times than not, are not feeling well, and are left unknowing how long they will wait to be treated..

The following best practices reveal how to alleviate stress (and sometimes chaos!) that can arise in a busy waiting room.

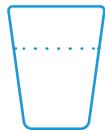
Implementing any of the following ideas in your healthcare facility will improve your patients' experience. And if you're able to eliminate the inconvenience of waiting altogether, you can improve patient satisfaction even further while allowing staff to feel confident and in control.



1. Hand sanitizer, tissues, and waste baskets.

Being in close proximity to strangers may be stressful, so long wait times can heighten the anxiety for some of your patients.

Providing tissues and waste baskets in visible areas of the waiting room is common practice, but it's important to also offer hand sanitizer. This will encourage good hygiene among your patients and allow everyone in the waiting room to feel a bit more secure in the environment if someone does have need to sneeze, cough, or blow their nose.



2. Keep them hydrated.

When people are thirsty or feeling dehydrated, tension can mount. Help patients from having to walk outside the waiting room to find a water fountain or purchase bottled water.

Maintaining a spring water dispenser with disposable cups is an easy way to show that you're dedicated to keeping them comfortable—and it doesn't require a huge investment.

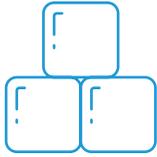


3. WiFi + charging stations.

It's become nearly a must-have these days: free WiFi. If your waiting room isn't equipped to provide your patients with free access to the internet on their mobile devices, they will usually become frustrated

Access to WiFi in public spaces is becoming so widespread that many people anticipate its presence whenever they're in a place like a waiting room, office building, restaurant, or lobby. And psychologically, it helps the wait time not feel so long!

Modernize your waiting room with complimentary guest WiFi access along with charging stations so patients can charge their batteries while waiting to be served. Remember to post a sign that gives information about the free WiFi as well as the password to log in.



4. Entertain the kids.

Having a basket of coloring books and crayons for children to play with will accomplish two things: keep parents and caregivers from having to find ways to entertain their children while they wait, and offer the rest of your patients relief from bored or noisy children.



5. Keep pens and paper at the ready.

And speaking of keeping the kids occupied, be sure to have a stash of pens and blank paper available for the adults too! Many people use the time they spend in a waiting room to make to do lists, pay bills, and catch up on paperwork.

Keeping pens and paper readily available also prevents your staff from being interrupted by patients coming up to ask if they can borrow a pen.



6. Keep chairs, surfaces, and doors clean.

You probably already have a cleaning crew that maintains your waiting room regularly. But if they're not servicing your location daily, it's important to assign daily general cleaning duties to your reception staff or on-site janitorial crew.

The waiting room is best checked 2-3 times throughout the day to ensure that trash cans are emptied, magazine racks/piles are straightened and that doors, glass and other surfaces are free from smudges, debris, dust, and germs.

Many people already feel a bit anxious waiting in tight spaces with strangers and an untidy appearance or lack of cleanliness can increase anxiety for everyone.



7. Soft, calming music.

Silence can make patients in your waiting room feel uncomfortable when they're sitting in close quarters with strangers. Some people feel pressure to make small talk to try and eliminate silence and wind up putting other patients in a position to hold conversations they may prefer not to have.

This is why calm music is a great way to keep your patients relaxed. Please note that playing music in a business requires a business licensed account. You can find commercial-free, licensed music accounts from several places on the internet — SiriusXM for Business and Mood Media are two to check out.



8. Crosswords, puzzles, brain teasers, and Sudoku.

In addition to magazines, brain games are a great distraction for patients in a waiting room. Sudoku and crossword puzzles are entertaining crowd pleasers.



9. Add an aquarium.

Maintaining a nice fish tank in your waiting room will require a bit more effort in terms of maintenance, but the payoff could be worth it. Many people find water elements to be relaxing and soothing.

The aquarium provides a point of concentration for your patients and allows them to relax while they observe the fish swimming in the water. Added bonus? Kids love fish tanks! So if the coloring books and crayons aren't cutting it, you've got back up.



10. Trivia games on the wait notification screen.

Companies such as Tap TV and Buzztime offer trivia game channels to help your patients pass the time. For example, a trivia question will appear on the screen along with 4-5 multiple choice answers. A timer at the bottom of the screen indicates how much time is left to make their final selection before the correct answer is displayed.

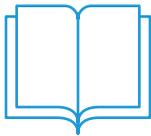
This keeps people engaged and entertained and can even end up sparking a friendly competition between the patients waiting together. And best of all? Their focus is taken off of the fact that they're waiting (and they might even learn some cool facts to impress their friends!)



11. Pleasant lighting.

Lighting is known to play a major role in people's moods, so take a bit of the budget to invest in lamps and track lighting. Providing a calm setting that's easy on your patient's eyes is one key way you can keep people feeling less irritated.

We all know how unpleasant it is to be stuck in a waiting room that is showered in fluorescent or other harsh lighting. Talk to a contractor or your building manager to switch outdated lighting to a more modern system that operates on a dimmer. If this isn't a possibility, consider keeping the overhead lights off and invest in well-placed floor and table lamps that add a bit of ambiance to the waiting area. One final trick is to unscrew every other fluorescent bulb; that will do wonders alone.



12. Local newspaper and relevant publications.

Expand the reading material in your waiting room to include a few copies of the local newspaper and a regional, or topically relevant publication.

People often enjoy taking a break from staring at their screens and so whether it's a subscription to your area's daily or weekly newspaper, having a bit of local news on hand that people can flip through allows patients a break from their phone screen during longer wait times.



13. Implement a mobile check-in system.

Mobile check-in systems eliminate lines and crowded waiting room, increase productivity, and decrease operating costs. Have you ever actually gone through the process of checking-in at your own healthcare facility and waited?

If you haven't, go ahead and try it to get a feel for the experience—you might be surprised by what you discover.

However, with today's technology, there are mobile-enabled queuing systems capable of creating virtual lines that reduce the number of patients crowded within a waiting room.

The technology is out there, but you'll want to ask a few questions as you check out the various systems available today:

- ▶ Does the system provide patients with the ability to join these virtual lines from their mobile phone, home phone, an on-site kiosk or directly from your website?
- ▶ Are your patients able to interact with the system if they need to scoot back in line while they run an errand or step outside to take an important personal or work phone call?
- ▶ Are patients informed via text message updates as their turn approaches? When they are ready to be seen by your staff, do they receive a text message summoning them?

Selecting the right automated queuing system for your healthcare facility needs will result in boosted productivity, happier staff, better response quality, and improved patient satisfaction scores.

This last tip allows your patients to wait for services however and wherever they choose by holding their appointment with a mobile phone — no matter where they are!

This decreases your patients' perceived wait time and equips busy waiting rooms with flexible solutions that provide absolute control over scheduling and patient flow.

For more information on how to implement a mobile check-in system at your healthcare facility, please schedule a demo with QLess today!

Request Demo

About QLess

QLess is the global leader in wait management and mobile check-in. The company's patented, cloud-based technology helps urgent care and medical offices lower operating costs and improve patient experiences by eliminating lines and offering convenient ways to make and manage appointments. QLess clients span six continents and include Renown Urgent Care, APlus Urgent Care, Brazil Public Healthcare, South Tampa Immediate Care and many more.



99%
citizen satisfaction



75%
reduction of walkaways



40 million
current users



1,200+ years
of time saved

"QLess mobile check-in transformed our urgent care facility in ways beyond what I imagined. QLess will become a standard in healthcare systems."

— Medical Director, APlus Urgent Care

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