

## Instagram, Twitter and YouTube 101 for Doctors

Perhaps you've already mastered the use of Facebook as a tool for marketing your practice. Or perhaps you don't want to use Facebook at all, and want to explore other outlets. Fortunately, there are many to choose from... almost too many, in fact. YouTube, Twitter, Instagram... what are all these, and where do you start? Here's a beginners' guide to get you started exploring the rest of the social media universe.

Twitter, like Facebook, lets you connect and interact with patients and colleagues... and even keep an eye on competitors. So how does it differ from Facebook? The short answer is: it's shorter. All posts (called "tweets") that you write must be 140 characters or fewer. This makes Twitter ideal for sharing links to news, promotions and coupon codes. Adding relevant hashtags at the end of your tweets makes it easier for users to find your tweets when they search for a specific term like "plastic surgery" or "facelift." There are also tools that let you send tweets at optimal times, when the greatest number of users in your time zone are most likely to be logged in and active.

Instagram is a photo-sharing platform similar to Twitter, with a smaller but often more active audience; Instagram users engage with posted content up to 120 times more than on the larger sites. If the laws of your country allow you to use before-and-after photos of patients in advertising your practice, this is an ideal medium. These and all your other online sites should link to and from your YouTube channel.

Do a Google search for... well, anything. What are the very first results that come up? That's right — YouTube videos. Google owns YouTube, and gives video content a high priority in its browser search results. With over one billion users and nearly 820 million hours of video content, YouTube accounts for as much as one-third of all global internet traffic. This means it's an excellent way to reach a global audience (or rather, to help a global audience find you). 20% of YouTube's users are in the US, and another 88 countries have adapted their own versions in 76 different languages. This is a platform you can't afford *not* to use. Even if you're not a natural movie star, there are many ways to make YouTube work for you.

You don't need to buy a lot of expensive equipment, but you do need to have quality lighting and sound. You can use natural light, but be sure to keep the light source behind the camera. Invest in a decent webcam and microphone (don't rely on the ones built into your laptop).

Start by registering your own YouTube channel (perhaps using the name of your practice, your own name, or a clever screen name you invent to help people remember you ("DrSmile," for example). Your first video should be an introduction of yourself. There's simply no way around this; patients need to see your face and hear your voice in order to get a sense of your credibility and character. Talk about your own philosophy of plastic surgery, or tell the story of why you decided to become a plastic surgeon. You can go into the details of specific procedures in later videos, and alternate these with video introductions of your staff members.

The good news is that videos can (and should) be short — five minutes or less for detailed information on certain procedures, and 30 to 90 seconds for other content. Remember, you want these to be easy to watch, understand and share quickly; the more viewers you get, the more prospective patients know about you. Include a call to action at the end of each video urging viewers to subscribe to your YouTube channel, and visit your website to get more information on procedures and special promotions.