

## 7 easy ways to increase patient and physician referrals

Your practice runs on referrals – from patients, from colleagues, or from anybody who can testify to the quality of your skill and patient care. You'll need to use different approaches to market yourself to each group, but the basic principles are the same in every case: you are asking people to recommend your services to others, possibly in exchange for some kind of benefit. You probably won't get many referrals if you never ask for them – no matter which of the following approaches you take, your "ask" should always be clear, direct and professional:

1. Go out and introduce yourself in person to specialists in other areas of medicine. Shake their hands and offer them your services; they may be interested in exchanging referrals. After one in-person meeting, you (or your office manager) can follow up with an email or phone call every 2-4 weeks. Or hold an office open-house for other offices and office staff; this is another good way to exchange introductions and establish professional relationships that lead to more patients.
2. Offer public speaking engagements at local hospitals. Not only will you be helping to educate the public, but hospitals will often advertise these events free of charge. Get people's interest by offering information on popular topics such as weight loss or Botox.
3. Being on-call at local hospitals is definitely time-consuming, but it's an excellent way to get more patients. Any hospitals at which you have admitting privileges should also list you on their websites, which gives you more exposure.
4. Let the media know you are available as a source of expert commentary. There are free lists you can subscribe to that send out available to offer expert commentary as needed. Have your office manager subscribe to free lists of media contact requests, and ask your office manager to follow up with the ones that fit your specialization.
5. Offer incentives to your existing patients in exchange for referrals, such as a discount coupon, a free sample of a product, or a copy of a book you've written. Depending on the laws of your country, there may be restrictions what you may offer in return for patient referrals. Of course it's never worth it to compromise ethics for the sake of business; the reward can be something as simple as a personal note of thanks.
6. Use your professional website to attract patients' interest. Offer short bits of interesting information or (appropriate) humor related to the plastic surgery procedures you offer, and make sure everything to send out to your mailing list (emails, newsletters, holiday cards) reminds them that new patient referrals are always welcome.
7. Post shareable content on your practice's Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube accounts. Make it informative and memorable – you want your name (or the name of your practice) to stay in people's minds, so they'll remember when they or someone they know is looking for plastic surgery.

Which of these methods are best for you and your practice? You can try any of these individually or in combination with others. With enough hard work (and time), you'll begin to see an increase in referrals from your patients and colleagues as they spread the word about everything your practice has to offer.