

## The Impact of Online Reviews on Your New Patient Growth

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An increasing number of web-based consumer review sites such as [Yelp](#), [Merchant Circle](#), [Insider Pages](#) and [Angie's List](#) allow patients to compliment or criticize chiropractors publicly or anonymously on the Internet. These sites aggregate reviews about your practice in a single listing, making it easy for a new or referred patient to assess the opinions of other patients before deciding to make an appointment with your practice. Do a simple search for your name or practice name on one of these review sites. You may be surprised to find a handful of reviews, some of which are positive and others that are less appealing and even damaging to your practice's image. With more and more people using the Internet to find local health care providers, you can guarantee that online patient opinions, recommendations and ratings will be factored into a potential patients' appointment making decisions.

### Impact of Reviews and Your Website Traffic

A patient looking for a chiropractor in Chicago, Illinois, might type "chiropractor Chicago IL" into [Google](#). The first search results that display in the search engine are the "Google Place" results, formerly known as Google Maps. To the right of each search result are the "Google Reviews" with a star rating. As a searching patient, which of these chiropractors would you be more inclined to click on or call; the one with five gold stars and 30 great reviews, or the listing with no reviews, or worse, three or four reviews that are horrible?

For better or worse, the impact of one patient's opinion of your practice can be far-reaching, and patients must be fully confident in the integrity and expertise of their chiropractor before they engage that practice's services. An in-person referral may reach one or two people, but an online review has the potential to reach an exponential number of potential patients who are spending a great deal of their time on the Internet. Being proactive about your online image and taking steps to ensure your most loyal patients are aware of how they can offer their praises in the form of an online review is critical to managing and encouraging a positive reputation for your practice on the Web.

### Google's Important Role in Online Reviews

Of all of the local search and review platforms, Google is undeniably the leader, not only in search with 66% market share, but also in reviews. Google makes it extremely easy for a patient to post a review of a practice quickly, and since this is the number one place people are looking to for their local information, you can't afford to ignore your Google presence. That's not to say that Yelp and other third-party review sites aren't of any value. These web-based directories should continually be monitored for accuracy and completeness, but your presence on Google will have the most impact on the growth of your practice, as it has the largest number of users and the greatest influence on your reputation.

To ensure your practice has strong visibility and a positive standing in the Google search results, you need to first verify your Google Place Page. Your Place Page is an essential step for improving

your search ranking and helping patients find information, read reviews and get a basic feeling for whether or not they want you to be their chiropractor.

### Asking Patients for Reviews

Once you have claimed, verified and optimized your Google Place Page and other online directory listings, then you need to implement a strategy to start getting your most loyal patients to review you online. Good reviews will help bring in new patients wavering on the edge of a decision and help you identify what your patients really think about you, your staff and your services. It may seem uncomfortable to ask patients to review you online, but if you have regular, satisfied patients, then they already have a positive view of your practice and they'll want to help you out. Following a patient's visit, simply ask them if they enjoyed their appointment. When they say yes, ask them if they would mind reviewing you, and then show them all the convenient ways you've created for them to do so.

This may include handing the patient a small business card with step-by-step instructions on how to access your Google Place Page and leave a review from their home computer. For tech-savvy patients with smartphones, you can even generate a good review before the patient leaves your office. Your website provider should be able to create a mobile-compatible version of your website which links directly to your Google Place Page where the patient can review you right from their smartphone or tablet. As you collect e-mail addresses from your patients, look for those with Google e-mail accounts. These patients are already Google users, meaning they can quickly and easily login to review your practice in a matter of minutes.

### Take Responsibility for Your Online Reputation

Don't let a few online reviews derail your online reputation. Instead, take advantage of the potential impact your satisfied patients' opinions can have on your practice's growth. A professionally designed website and first page Google ranking combined with positive patient reviews is one of the best ways to win clicks and secure new patients today. An expert in websites and online marketing for chiropractors can help you claim your Google Place Page and implement a complete review strategy that includes easy-to-access online review pages, patient review instruction cards and a quick in-office mobile reviews solution. In less than a year, you can garner enough positive reviews to combat one or two negatives that inevitably appear from time to time, thus positioning your practice as the "chiropractor of choice" for patients who find you online.