



CAHPS: Tips for Improving the Patient Experience

The Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS®) is an annual survey about patients experience with their health plan and providers. The National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) requires it for accreditation. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) requires it for Medicare Star Ratings. The survey gauges patient perceptions of the quality of the health care they receive related to:

- Provider accessibility
- Patient and provider relationship
- Provider communication

Below are examples of survey questions that are heavily impacted by providers and staff during patient visits. We've also included tips and reminders to improve the office visit experience.

GETTING NEEDED CARE	
Sample Questions	• How often did you get an appointment to see a specialist as soon as you needed it? • How often was it easy to get the care, tests or treatment you needed?
Tips	• If possible, keep time in each days schedule to accommodate urgent visits • If possible, offer patients the option of scheduling an appointment with a nurse practitioner or physician's assistant • Make sure the patient is being attended to if the doctor is delayed
GETTING CARE QUICKLY	
Sample questions	• Respondent got care for illness/injury as soon as needed • Respondent got non-urgent appointment as soon as needed
Tips	• Provide a nurse advice line or secure email so patients have other ways to receive care • Add patients to a wait list to be called if an earlier appointment time is available • Facilitate referrals and assist with specialist appointments as appropriate
HOW WELL DOCTORS COMMUNICATE	
Sample questions	• Doctor explained things in a way that was easy to understand • Doctor listened carefully to enrollee • Doctor showed respect for what enrollee had to say • Doctor spent enough time with enrollee
Tips	• Invite questions and encourage patients to take notes • Explain what you're doing and how it impacts the patient
CARE COORDINATION	
Sample questions	• How often did your personal doctor seem informed and up-to-date about the care you got from these doctors or other health providers? • During a scheduled appointment, how often did your doctor have your medical records or other information about your care? • When your personal doctor ordered a blood test, x-ray or other test for you, how often did someone from your personal doctor's office follow up to give you those results? • How often did you and your personal doctor talk about all the prescription medicines you were taking? • Did you get the help you needed from your personal doctor's office to manage your care among these different providers and services? • How often did your personal doctor seem informed and up-to-date about the care you got from specialists?
Tips	• Prepare the patient's medical records and other information about patient's care • Ask patient if they've seen any other providers since last seeing you • When a test is scheduled, let your patient know when they can expect the results and who will be contacting them regarding the results • Discuss prescription medications with the patient • If your office has a patient portal, encourage patients or caregivers to use it if they feel comfortable