

# CAHPS® Survey Questions & Tips for Success

The Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers & Systems (CAHPS) is a survey conducted each year to gauge members’ perspectives on their health plan and the quality of healthcare they receive. It serves as a vital performance indicator for the Medicare Advantage Star program. While most plans focus only on the active survey period, focus on CAHPS should continue year-round.

## Survey Benefits

Research has demonstrated a correlation between positive health care patient experiences and improved clinical and business outcomes. For example:

- Greater compliance and adherence to medical advice (i.e. disease management, prevention) and treatment plans
- Better health outcomes
- Patient retention
- May lower risk of malpractice lawsuits

## Provider Impact

Since the Patient Experience is measured through the eyes of the patient, the physician-patient relationship can play an integral part in that perception.

Gaining insight into the patient experience is crucial to achieving patient-centered care. By examining different facets of the experience, we can acknowledge and address individual patient preferences, needs, and values alongside other factors such as the effectiveness and safety of care, which are indispensable for obtaining a comprehensive understanding of healthcare quality.

**Below are some key CAHPS survey questions with tips to ensure patients have a positive experience.**

Measure	Sample of patient survey questions
 <b>Annual flu vaccine</b>	Have you had a flu shot this year?

**Tips for success:**

- Administer flu shot as it becomes available each fall.
- Eliminate barriers to accessing flu shots by offering patients multiple options, e.g. walk-in appointments, flu shot clinics, flu shot provided regardless of the appointment type (based on patient eligibility).
- Promote flu shots through website, patient portal, and phone greeting.

 <b>Getting appointments and care quickly</b>	In the last six months: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How often did your physician see you within 15 minutes of your appointment time?</li> <li>• How often did you receive immediate care when you urgently required it?</li> <li>• How often were you able to secure a routine care appointment when needed?</li> </ul>
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**Tips for success:**

- Patients exhibit more tolerance towards appointment delays when informed of the reasons.
  - When the provider is behind schedule:
    - Communicate with the patient and respect their time by asking office staff to keep them updated and explain the cause of the delay.
    - Contact your patients by telephone, text, or email when delays are expected.
    - Break up wait times by moving patients from the waiting room into the exam room to take vitals.
- Implement online appointment scheduling and consider leaving a few appointment slots open each day for urgent visits, including post-inpatient discharge visits.
- Ask patient for their preferred date or time to set appointment.
- Target physicals within four weeks and sick visits within 48-72 hours of appointment request.

Measure	Sample of patient survey questions
 <p><b>Overall rating of healthcare quality</b></p>	<p>Using any number between zero and 10, where zero is the worst health care possible and 10 is the best, what number would you use to rate all your health care in the last six months?</p>

**Tips for success:**

- Ask open-ended questions to give patients an opportunity to disclose health issues and concerns.
- Survey your patients, asking how you can improve their health care experience.
- Provide a quick explanation for lengthy wait times, to significantly improve patient satisfaction.

 <p><b>Care coordination</b></p>	<p>In the last six months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you visited your personal doctor for a scheduled appointment, how often did the PCP have your medical records or other care information on hand?</li> <li>• When your personal doctor ordered a blood test, X-ray, or other test for you, how often did the doctor’s office follow up to give you those results?</li> <li>• When your personal doctor ordered a blood test, X-ray, or other test for you, how often did you get those results as soon as you needed them?</li> <li>• How often did you and your personal doctor talk about all the prescription medicines you were taking?</li> <li>• Did you get the help you needed from your personal doctor’s office to manage your care among different providers and services?</li> <li>• How often did your personal doctor seem informed and up to date about the specialty care you received?</li> </ul>
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**Tips for success:**

- Prior to walking into the exam room, review the reason for the patient’s visit and determine if there are outstanding follow-ups needed on health issues or concerns from previous visits.
- Ensure timely notification of test results by asking patients their preferred method of receipt and clearly communicate when results can be expected.
- Utilize or implement a patient portal to share test results and consider automatically releasing them following their review.
- Ask your patients if they saw another provider since their last visit. If you know patients receive specialty care, discuss their visit and treatment plan, including new prescriptions.
- Complete a medication review at every visit.

 <p><b>Getting needed care</b></p>	<p>In the last six months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How often were you able to get an appointment to see a specialist when needed?</li> <li>• How often were you able to easily obtain the care, tests, or treatment needed?</li> </ul>
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**Tips for success:**

- Set realistic expectations for how long it may take to schedule an appointment with the specialist if not urgent.
- If your office has an established relationship with a specialist, ask staff to help secure an appointment.
- Review with patients their role in securing care, tests, or treatment (e.g., scheduling with specialists, timely appointments).



**Questions?**  
 Please contact your Provider Relations Specialist or call the Customer Engagement Team at (866) 685-8996, and press option 2, between 9:00am to 5:30pm, Monday through Friday.

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<sup>1</sup> Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). 2020. “The CAHPS Ambulatory Care Improvement Guide: Practical Strategies for Improving Patient Experience.” [ahrq.gov/cahps/quality-improvement/improvement-guide/improvement-guide.htm](https://ahrq.gov/cahps/quality-improvement/improvement-guide/improvement-guide.htm)