

# You Need to Enhance Online Patient Experience on Your Dermatology Website



Do you need to revamp your web pages so your practice can deliver a patient-friendly virtual experience?

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>> It seems like everything moved online in 2020, including dermatology practices like yours. Your practice has probably put a lot of effort into creating a comfortable office environment so that your patients can have the best experience every time they visit, but after everything shifted from in-person to virtual, how does your online patient experience compare? Experts predict that the shift toward virtual medical services is here to stay, and 2021 poses some additional digital changes of its own. This means that your web pages may need a revamp for your practice to keep up and maintain a patient-friendly virtual experience.

## TELEHEALTH ISN'T GOING ANYWHERE

The first major change that you have likely already experienced is the increased use of telemedicine or telehealth. Each dermatology patient's preferences will be different, and if your office is open, you will probably still have patients coming into the office. However, after 2020, more and more patients have become accustomed to having access to everything they need online, including their medical care. *Forbes* points to one survey by Sage Growth Partner that reveals that 59 percent of respondents were more likely to use telehealth services than before, and 33 percent would even leave their current healthcare provider if s/he didn't offer telehealth. These patients will likely continue to seek telehealth services and may consider telehealth a new factor in choosing a dermatologist, so your practice may need to continue providing access to telehealth services on your website in 2021.

Whether you choose to continue offering telehealth services or not, the reality is that these changing trends have likely brought more dermatology patients online to visit der-

matology web pages. As a result, to attract new patients in 2021 and retain existing patients, your web pages will have to be up to the task of keeping these patients' attention. That means providing an exceptional online patient experience this year more than ever.

## GOOGLE'S NEW RANKING FACTORS

Simply having a working web page is not enough, as most patients looking for dermatology services online rely on Google to find what they are looking for, and Google uses fairly strict criteria to decide where websites rank in their search results.

Google has always prioritized user experience when ranking web pages. Still, in 2021 they are expected to take things one step further by introducing a new set of page experience signals to inform ranking. Currently, the criteria Google uses to rank web pages include:

- Mobile-friendliness
- Safe Browsing
- HTTPS security
- Intrusive interstitial guidelines

From May 2021 onwards, Google has revealed that they plan to add new page experience signals. These new additions are called Core Web Vitals, and, in simple terms, they measure the following:

- LCP (Largest Contentful Paint): How long it takes the largest image or text block to load.
- FID (First Input Delay): The speed of the site's responsiveness to user interaction.
- CLS (Cumulative Layout Shift): How stable the page's visuals are or whether images/buttons jump around or shift.

To stay on the first page of search results, your website

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will need to score high in each of these metrics to prove to Google that users will find the experience they are looking for if they are directed to your page. Keep in mind that just as you want to give your patients the best experience possible at your office, Google will also try to give them the best possible experience online. By meeting Google’s requirements, you will also be creating a better online patient experience.

### WAYS TO GET YOUR WEBSITE UP TO SPEED

**Speed.** As you can see, speed is a primary factor in most of Google’s metrics, so this will be the first and perhaps the most essential area you will want to improve. Most web users won’t wait more than a few seconds for a page to load or to get the information they want, so if your website is too slow, patients will be more likely to click away and choose another provider instead. To meet Google’s LCP requirements and give your patients the best online user experience, your page’s largest content needs to load within 2.5 seconds when the page starts loading. You can test this out using any available tools online, and Google even recommends a few options themselves.

**Mobile friendly.** Another increasingly important factor is how mobile-friendly your website is. More people are using mobile devices to search for information online, and if your website can’t provide a smooth, attractive mobile experience, it will leave a bad impression. Make sure all your web pages are optimized for mobile devices to ensure that you are best meeting your patients’ digital needs.

**Content.** Content is still one of the most important factors in giving your patients a positive online experience. Patients who visit your web pages are not consciously thinking about any of the other factors mentioned here. If your page is loading slowly, doesn’t show up on the first page of search results, or has any other issues, most patients will click away and go to a different website without a second thought. What patients will notice most is the content they see on your page. Make sure your content is visually appealing, relevant, informative, and most importantly, that it answers the types of questions they are asking.

**Accessibility.** In 2021, accessibility is more important than ever, with Google no longer supporting Flash and with the new CLS criteria. In addition to the usual accessibility requirements like having a logical link structure within your site, make sure that your website has removed any Flash components and that patients can interact easily and quickly with elements on your pages without any shifting components.


### KEY TAKEAWAYS

Today, the patient experience begins before a patient ever steps foot in your office. To meet your dermatology patients’ changing expectations in 2021, you will need to provide them with an exceptional online experience. Ideally, your dermatology practice will need to do this by offering telehealth services and maintaining attractive web pages that meet Google’s ranking metrics. Get started by improving your website’s speed, mobile-friendliness, content, and accessibility, and you will be well on your way to providing your patients a positive online experience with your dermatology practice. ■

*Naren Arulrajah, President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, has been a leader in medical marketing for over a decade. Ekwa provides comprehensive marketing solutions for busy dermatologists, with a team of more than 180 full time professionals, providing web design, hosting, content creation, social media, reputation management, SEO, and more. If you’re looking for ways to boost your marketing results, call 855-598-3320 for a free strategy session with Naren.*

**STAY AHEAD OF SEO TRENDS**

This trend is especially active now since so many people have spent months working online.



Getting ahead of the SEO search curve now will give your office the advantage before demand materializes and moves traffic-wise. This Ekwa Marketing video tells you how.

**Watch now: [PracDerm.com/SEO2021](https://PracDerm.com/SEO2021)**