

Build Backlinks to Boost Your Dermatology SEO



Understand why backlinks matter. And how to get them.

BY NAREN ARULRAJAH

>> The list of ways to optimize your dermatology website's search engine performance is virtually endless. You can improve your content, design, keywords, metatags, page loading time, site structure, and more. However, the reality is that on-site SEO (search engine optimization) is only part of the picture. If you want stellar website performance, you need to take your SEO efforts off-site.

THE POWER OF INBOUND LINKS

Backlinks matter to Google. Those from reputable, relevant websites can improve your search ranking. On the other hand, poor quality links can potentially have a negative effect.

To understand how Google views links, just think of your favorite social media platform. Imagine you see a how-to or "life hack" video that sparks your interest, but it's a method you've never heard of anyone using, so you question its validity. Then several people who you respect share the same video, giving it credibility. Or, a just few spammy pages share it, which makes you think it's not worth trying.

Google analyzes links in much the same way we assess social shares. The number of links matter, but so does the source. This is true for any website, but especially important to dermatologists. Google holds medical content to higher E-A-T (Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trustworthiness) standards, making quality inbound links essential.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD BACKLINK?

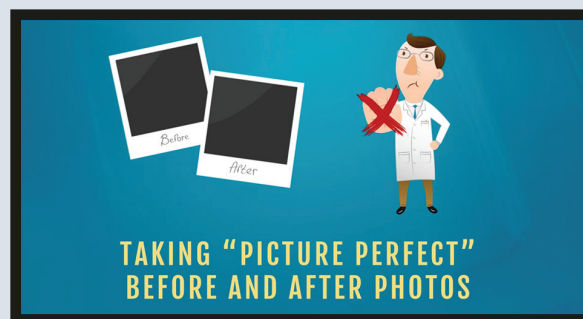
Like financial investments, you want a diverse link portfolio that grows over time. You also want each asset to be valuable. The first thing to remember is that some links include a "nofollow" tag. It is a bit of HTML on the referer's site that tells Google to ignore the link. These links can bring in organic traffic, because some viewers will click through. However, they don't help (or hurt) your SEO.

When analyzing your backlink portfolio, look at those

without a "no follow" tag. So, what does a high-quality backlink look like?

- **Earned.** A local beauty blogger might write about getting Botox in your office, or a news article might list you as keynote speaker at an upcoming conference. In either example, the article author may naturally include a link to your website. You didn't request it, you earned it. Naturally, Google prefers these types of links.
- **Professionally relevant.** This goes to establishing authority in your niche. Maybe a well-known athlete mentioned getting acne treatment at your practice, which earns you a link from a sports news website. That is good, but it would carry much more weight with Google if it were a medical or beauty website.
- **Locally relevant.** These links are important for local SEO and can potentially help land your website in the coveted three-pack (the three featured results in local business searches). Good sources include local or regional dermatology associations, charity organiza-

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“ The people or companies that you already work with are natural sources of links. If you are a spokesperson for a laser manufacturer or sell a specific line of skincare products, inquire about website links.”

tions, bloggers, news outlets, and even nearby businesses.

- **Good anchor text.** In most cases, links are not just naked URLs. Instead, a few words are hyperlinked. This is your anchor text, and it helps the search algorithm determine the page’s topic. It should be relevant but avoid multiple links with identical text. For example, if 20 bloggers link to your site with the words “Awesome laser resurfacing!” it will look like you bought those links.

BACKLINK BUILDING STRATEGIES THAT WORK

How can you go about building a strong link portfolio?

- **Sharable content.** Give people a reason to link to your content, such as original research, in-depth information, unique resources, or even humor.
- **Upgrade mentions.** Have other websites mentioned you or your practice? Email and ask them to include website links.
- **Associates.** The people or companies that you already work with are natural sources of links. If you are a spokesperson for a laser manufacturer or sell a specific line of skincare products, inquire about website links.
- **Directories.** You don’t want to be included in a generic internet directory that exists for the purpose of backlink building. You do want to be listed on Healthgrades, WebMD, and other relevant high-quality directories.

DON'T SPAM YOURSELF!

Not all inbound links are good. Some are irrelevant, and Google ignores them. Even worse, some are spammy. They look bad to Google, as well as to human viewers who come across them.

What types of links should you avoid?

- **Paid links.** Purchasing links is probably the fastest way to get on Google’s bad side. (It is perfectly acceptable to buy advertising that includes a link, but it should have a “nofollow” tag.)

- **Reciprocals.** Never participate in link exchange schemes. On occasion, you will naturally link to another site that links to you, which Google understands. However, an excessive number will look spammy.
- **Guest blogging.** At one time, this was a great way to build links. Due to over-use, it fell into the spam category years ago.
- **Social spamming.** Sharing links on legitimate social media platforms is great. Adding links to comments on countless irrelevant blog posts and bookmarking sites like Delicious is spammy. In either case, Google will probably just ignore the links.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE THE WRONG LINKS?

You don’t always have control over who links to your practice, and reputable websites sometimes become spammy. There are lots of reasons why you might have undesirable inbound links. In truth, most websites do. Thankfully, Google is very good at recognizing (and ignoring) them—most of the time.

If you just have a few random bad links, you probably don’t need to do anything. However, you need to clean up your links if:

- Google has taken manual action against the website for unnatural links.
- You suspect these links are negatively impacting your website.
- There is a high number of spammy links.
- You or someone on your team previously engaged in prohibited link building techniques, such as purchasing links.
- You need to tell Google to ignore these links when evaluating your website, which is done with the disavow tool. You can disavow individual pages or entire domains. Whenever possible, also remove the offending links.

GO OFF-SITE

SEO doesn’t just happen on your website. If you want to boost your website’s search performance, you need to go off-site and make an effort to cultivate a high number of high-quality inbound links. ■

If you’re looking for ways to boost your marketing results, you can reach Naren at 855-598-3320.

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.