

# How to Turn New Patients Into Loyal Patients

Patients who rebook with the same provider are vital to practice growth.



Every month, millions of people search for healthcare providers on Zocdoc. We make it easy for patients to share their visit reasons (why they need care), sort by availability and location, read reviews and book appointments 24/7.

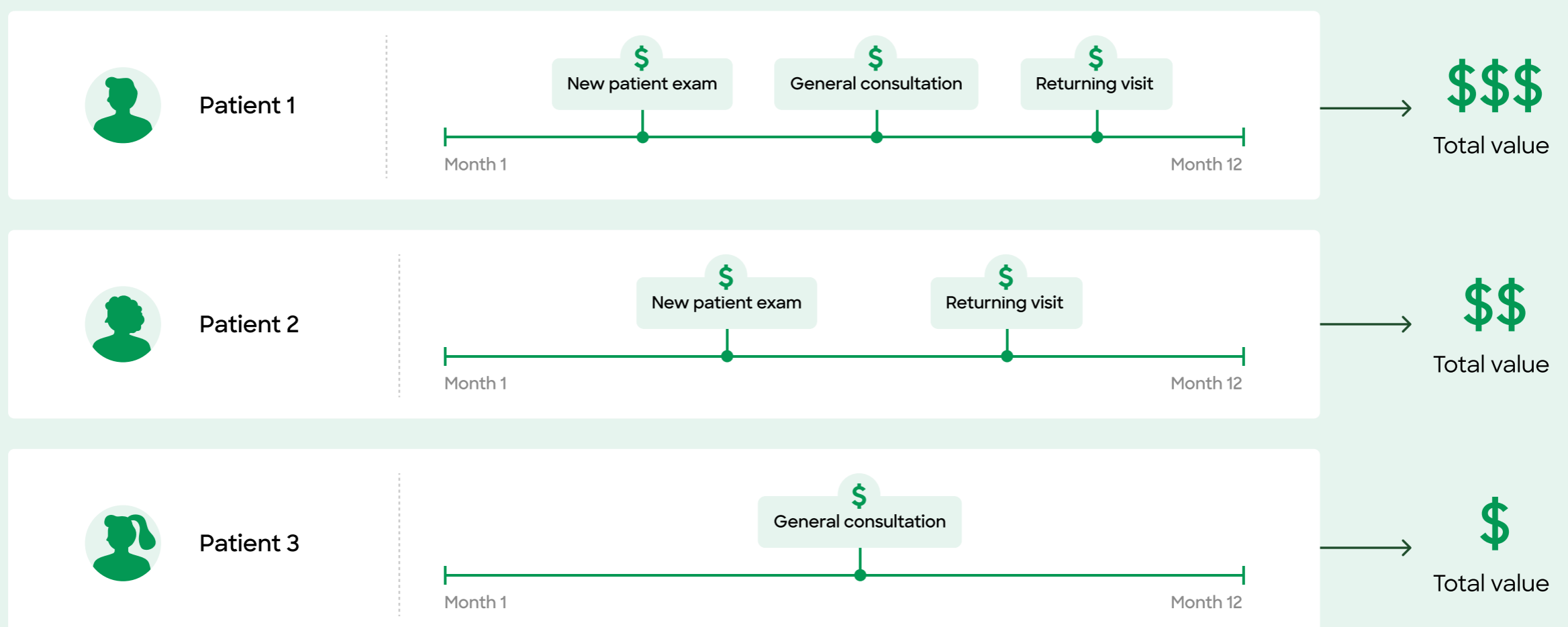
Providers are able to connect with the right patients where and how they're searching (via mobile and desktop) and seamlessly receive insurance and relevant patient information before each visit.

The good news is that patients who are looking for new providers on Zocdoc want to find providers they can keep seeing in the long run.

## In fact, 80+% of Zocdoc patients rebook with the same provider when rebooking in the same specialty.

While January, March and May tend to be the busiest times for new bookings, it's a great reminder to take steps to ensure new patients become long-term, loyal patients. Looking at the average patient value of the course of a year, the most valuable patients are those who return again and again. Understanding how likely patients are to rebook can help you better understand the long-term value, which can influence marketing spend and staffing.

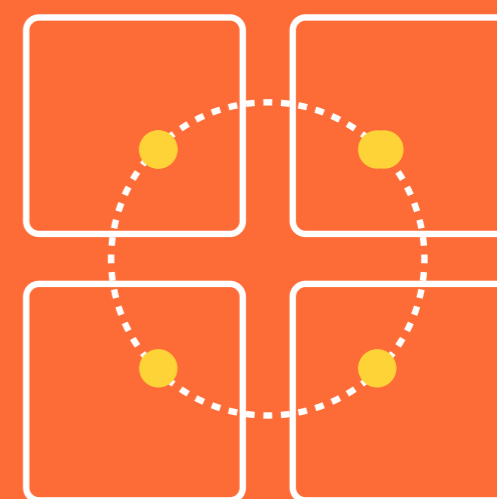
### Average patient value over the course of the year.



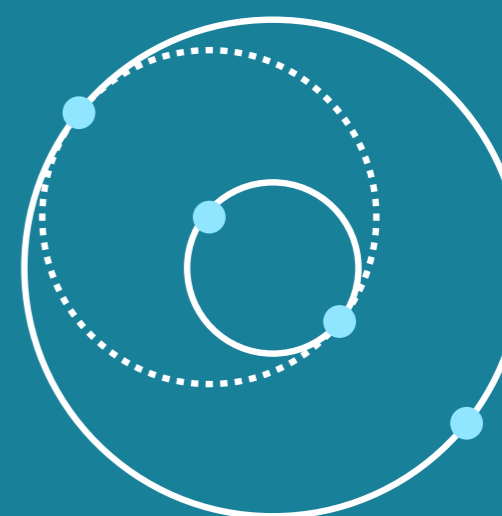
For example, knowing that a typical patient rebooks several times a year or is more likely to do so in January may impact when you spend more aggressively on marketing or how you choose to scale up your practice's availability.

We analyzed **Zocdoc's rebooking data from 2022 and 2023, with rebookings defined as initial new patient visits who later booked again with the same provider.** Here are the important insights you can leverage regarding which patients are most loyal and the factors that contribute to loyalty.

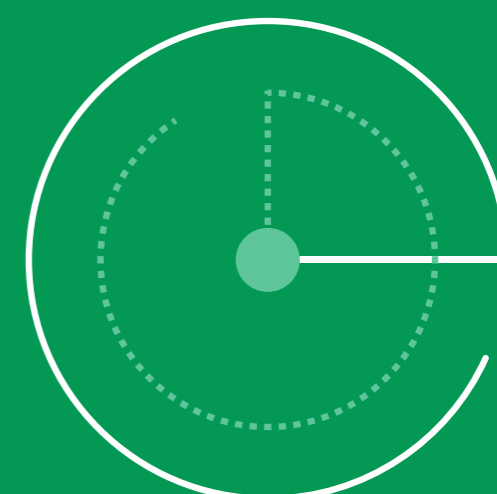
Which patients are most loyal?



Why are patients loyal?



When are patients loyal?

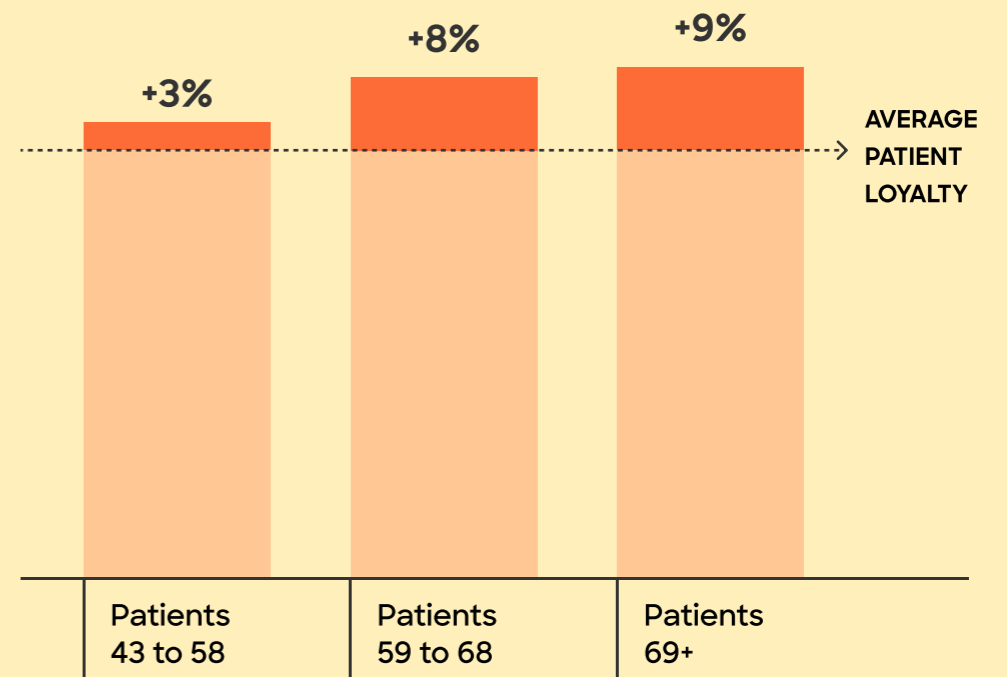


# Which patients are most loyal?

## Gender and Age

Patients want to find providers that are a good fit so they can keep coming back. Loyalty on Zocdoc is high and fairly consistent across gender.

Across all age groups, loyalty remains similarly high (75+%) and increased slightly with age. Patients ages 43 to 58 were 3% more likely to rebook compared to the average patient; those 59 to 68 and 69+ were 8% and 9% more likely to rebook, respectively.



## Insurance

More than 4 out of 5 appointments on Zocdoc are booked using commercial insurance. That said, whether it's commercial, state (Medicaid), or federal (Medicare), patients are similarly likely to rebook regardless of the type of insurance used for their initial visit.

The most loyal patients, however, are those who self-pay. Patients who self-pay are 4% more likely to rebook with the same provider when booking in the same specialty.

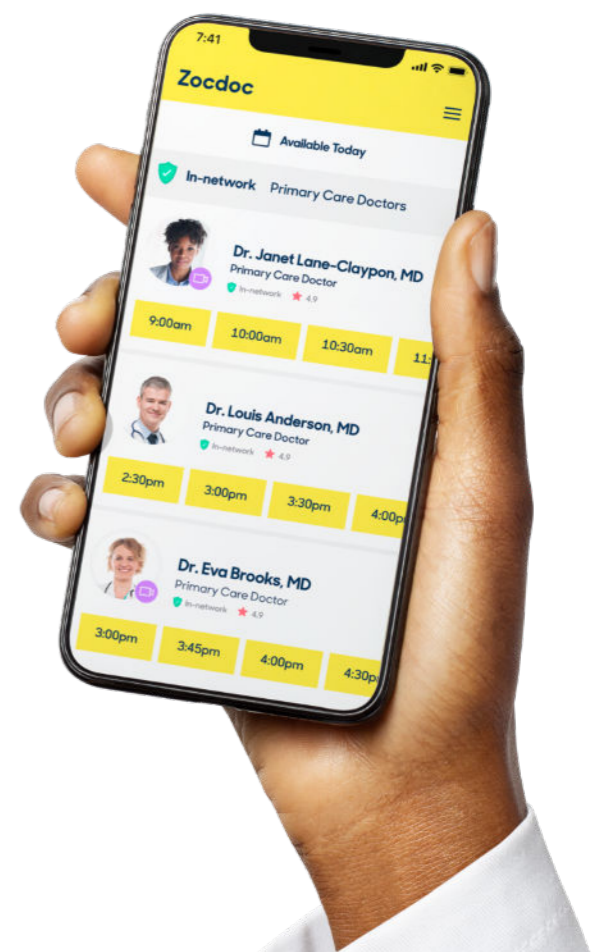
While bookings for cosmetic or one-off procedures could drive initial self-pay visits, patients may choose to follow up with the same provider for more routine care covered by insurance. For example, a patient who visits a dentist for teeth whitening initially may rebook for annual dental cleanings, which are more commonly covered by insurance. A patient who books a Botox appointment with a dermatologist may rebook for annual skin checks or hair loss.

## Mobile experience

Patients want flexibility when it comes to booking appointments via both mobile and desktop. Patients were loyal to providers who offered a seamless mobile experience.

79% of patients who booked via mobile web rebooked with the same provider.

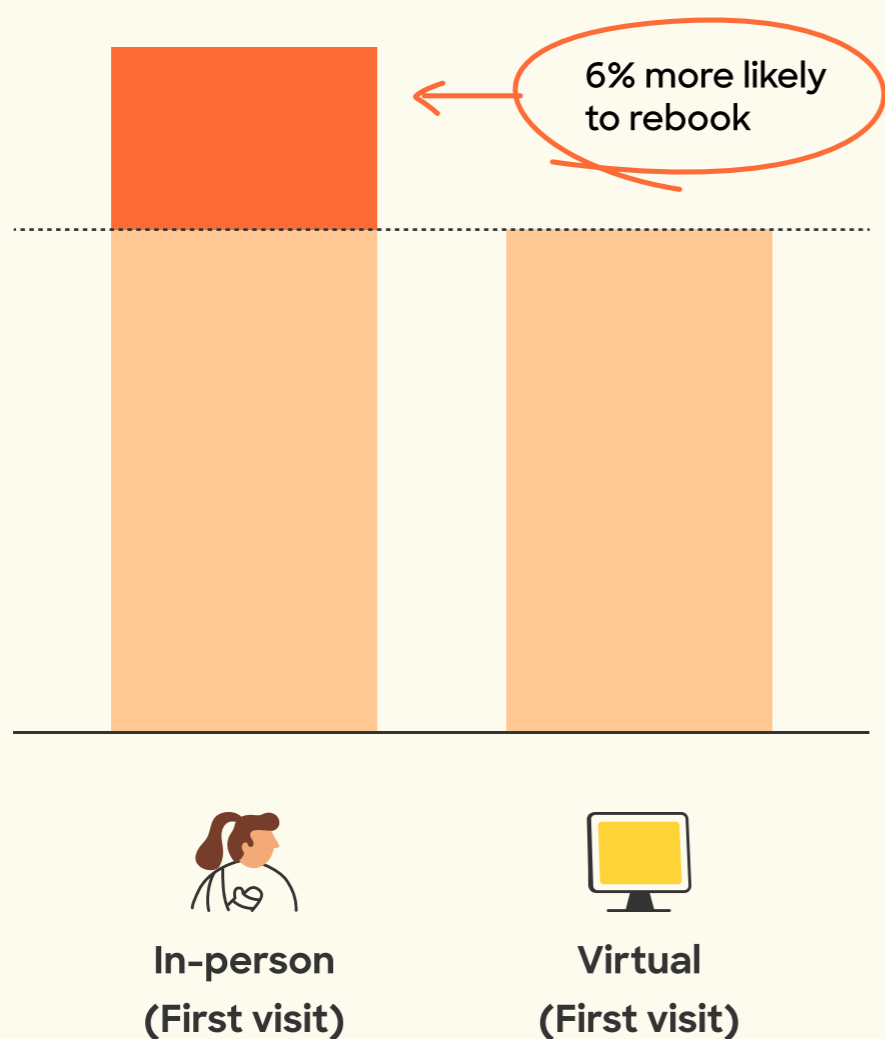
The easier it is to book with just a few clicks, the more likely patients are to continue to rebook.



### In-person vs. virtual

While the pandemic greatly expanded virtual care, in-person patients prove to be more loyal.

Patients whose first visit was in-person were 6% more likely to rebook with that same provider compared to those who saw the doctor virtually.



Seeing a doctor in-person can help create a strong, personal connection, which can contribute significantly to patient loyalty. When it comes to mental health, psychiatrists are the exception: virtual-only provider rebooking rates are the highest. However, psychologists see in-person provider rebooking rates 11% higher than virtual-only.

Still, providing flexibility with both in-person and virtual options can boost patient loyalty, depending on the speciality. For instance, primary care providers with a hybrid model (both in-person and virtual) see rebooking rates 20% higher compared to virtual-only.

## Does your specialty see high loyalty?

The top ranking specialties with the most loyal patients are providers that offer specialized care. Patients are often more likely to need recurring visits and the good news is they want to remain loyal to providers with whom they've had initial visits. Urgent care might seem like an exception, however, increasingly people turn to their established urgent care facility as part of their overall care team for visit reasons including STI testing, annual visits, sore throats, and prescriptions/refills.

- |  |                           |       |
|--|---------------------------|-------|
|  | 1. Allergist              | 90%   |
|  | 2. Pediatric subspecialty | 90%   |
|  | 3. Urgent care            | 88%   |
|  | 4. Chiropractor           | 87.5% |
|  | 5. Cardiologist           | 86%   |
|  | 6. Ophthalmologist        | 85.5% |
|  | 7. Ear, Nose & Throat     | 85.4% |
|  | 8. Pediatrician           | 84.6% |
|  | 9. Podiatrist             | 84.5% |
|  | 10. Optometrist           | 83.7% |

# Why are patients loyal?

## Loyal patient visit reasons

Prioritizing the patient experience from the first visit is key to unlocking loyalty. Across the board, patients rebook with the same providers for the same initial visit reasons, underscoring that they want to find providers they can keep seeing. For instance, when booking an initial appointment with a dermatologist for acne, 52% of patients rebooked with acne as the visit reason. For dental patients who needed dental cleanings, 68% rebooked with the same provider for a subsequent dental cleaning.

In addition to showing that patients want to return for the same visit reasons, the data shows they also like to establish routine care with the same providers. For instance, while a new patient might initially see an ob-gyn for contraception and rebook for the same reason, they also rebook for annual pap smears/exams, vaginal discharge/infections, and follow-ups. Similarly, a patient might establish care with a dermatologist initially for acne, and continue to rebook for annual skin exams and other skin concerns such as rashes. With urgent care, 61% of patients book a consultation initially and rebook for the same reason, followed by rebooking for annual physicals, prescriptions/refills, and sore throats.

Patients seeking ongoing care for routine health maintenance and preventive measures demonstrates the potential for long-term patient engagement and loyalty. Patients are discerning and every person coming in for an initial visit has the potential to become a loyal, long-term patient. By keeping this top of mind, providers can nurture strong relationships, enriching patient satisfaction and increasing loyalty.



52%

Dermatology patients rebooked the same provider for acne; following an initial acne visit



68%

Dental patients rebooked the same provider for a dental cleaning; following an initial dental cleaning



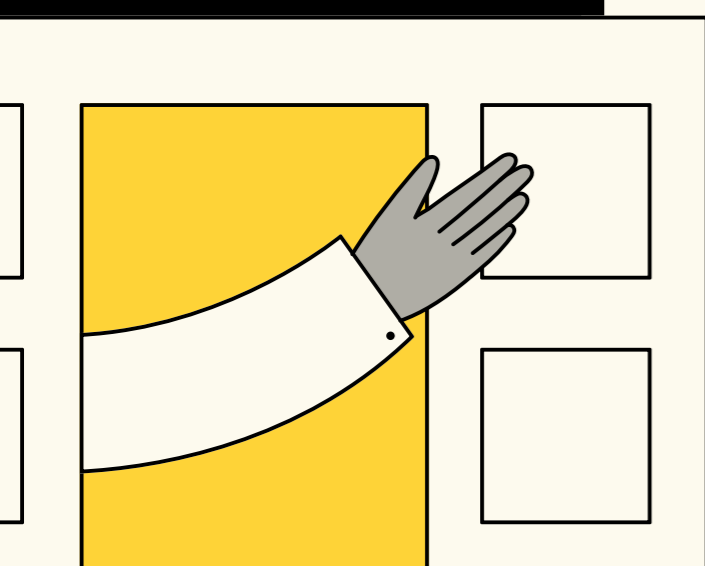
61%

Urgent care patients rebooked the same provider for a consultation; following an initial consultation



## Hospital affiliation

Hospital affiliation is one of several factors that can help build patient trust, which is why listing it when applicable can help make your online profile pop. Overall, there is a roughly **7% higher rebooking rate for providers who list their hospital affiliation** compared to those that don't. **Primary care providers with hospital affiliation listed, for example, see 8% higher rebooking rates** than their non-affiliated counterparts. Patients who see primary care providers for chronic conditions (or when new ones arise) might feel comforted knowing that their doctors are affiliated with larger hospital systems if additional procedures or testing is needed.

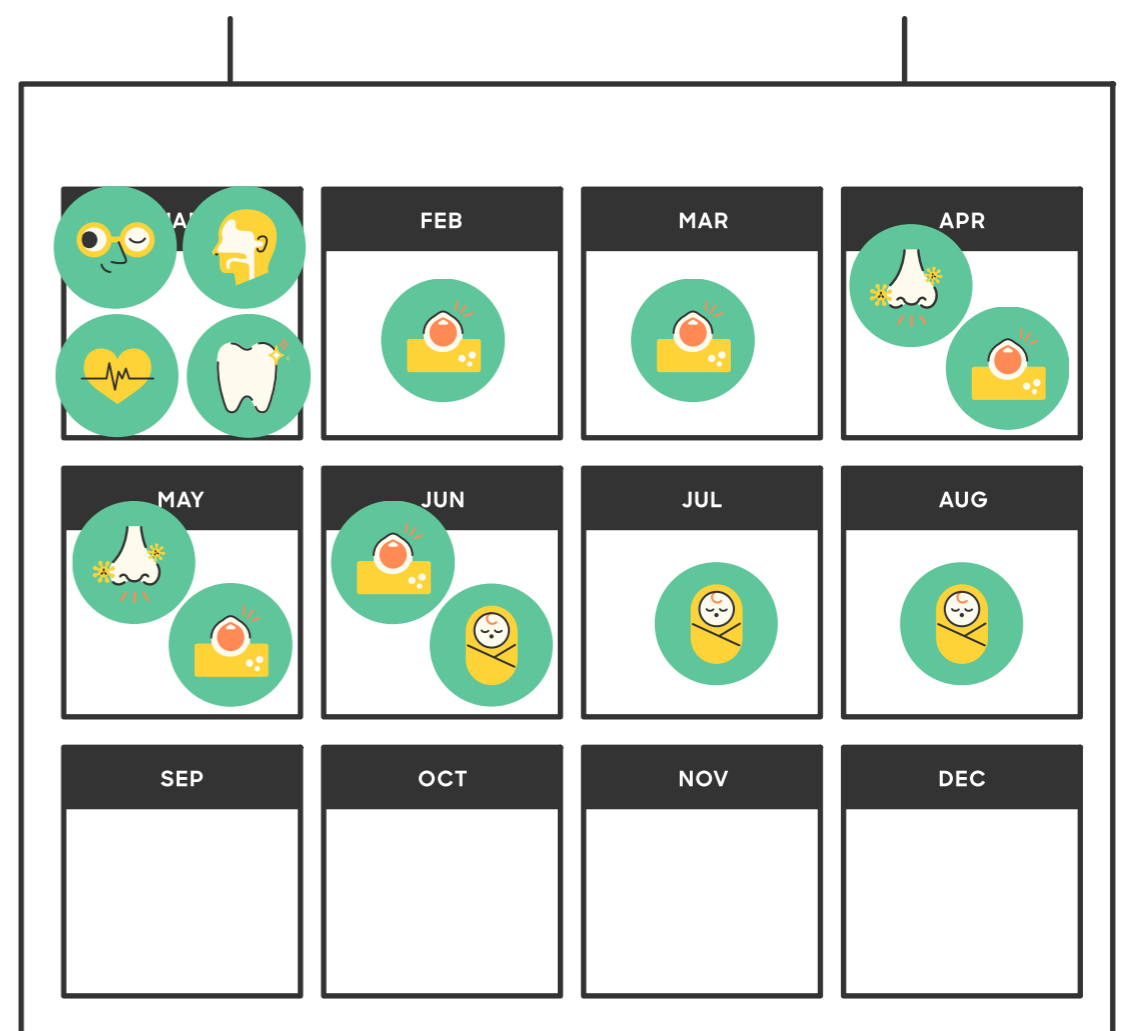


# When are patients loyal?

## Busy season

January is one of the busiest months for new patient bookings and it also sees the largest share of rebookings. Not only are new patients looking for providers to improve their health, but existing patients also want to return and focus on health in the new year. In particular, primary care providers, optometrists, ENTs, dentists, and cardiologists see especially higher rebooking volume in January.

There is of course some variation depending on specialty. For instance, dermatologists see peak rebooking season from February through June. Similarly, allergists see a surge of returning patients in April and May, which is likely due to springtime allergy season. Pediatricians also see an increase in patients returning over the summer, which can likely be attributed to the rush before the school year.



## Is your city loyal?

Nashville, Charlotte, Detroit, Seattle, and Boston are among the most loyal markets, with rebooking rates 8+% above average.



# What factors contribute to patient loyalty?

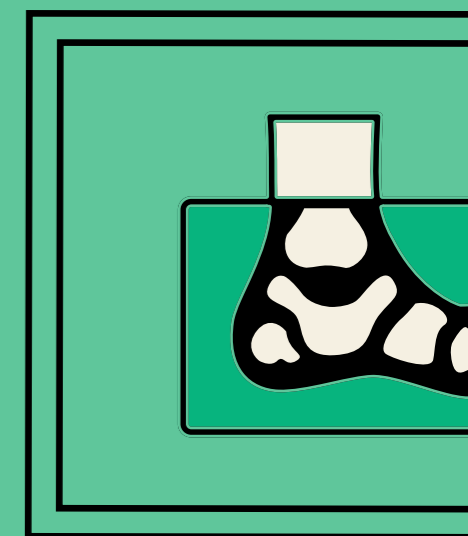
## Availability

Speed to care is one of the most important factors for patients when booking appointments with providers. Having greater availability and more near-term appointments can positively influence patient loyalty. When looking at 14-day availability, we divided the data into five categories based on appointment volume: well below average, slightly below average, average availability, slightly above average, and well above average.

Overall, providers who had well above average availability see 5% higher rebooking rates than those with well below average availability, though there is variance between specialties.

**Mental health specialties (psychiatrists and psychologists) see 50+% higher rebooking rates** with well above average availability vs. well below average availability, underscoring patients' urgency when it comes to mental health care. **Primary care providers with well below average availability saw 11% lower rebooking rates** than providers with average availability.

This shows that while beating the average helps with rebooking, falling below the average is a major hurdle for retaining patients. Finding ways to increase your availability, such as listing all of the doctors in your practice or leveraging availability from advanced practice providers (APPs), is essential for capturing new patients and ensuring they can easily rebook. Having a platform like Zocdoc that lists up-to-date availability and offers 24/7 booking access makes booking subsequent appointments seamless, increasing the likelihood that patients remain loyal.



New patients want to become loyal, long-term patients regardless of age or gender. Even when they book for a specific visit reason that may not be covered by their insurance, they're looking to establish further routine care with providers they like and trust. To set yourself up for success, it's important to pay attention to the long-term, lifetime value of a patient. Taking a patient-centric approach, such as unlocking 24/7 booking, streamlining the intake process online to reduce in-office wait times, and offering both in-person and virtual visits can help you acquire and retain more patients.

**To turn new patients into loyal ones, make sure you follow this checklist:**

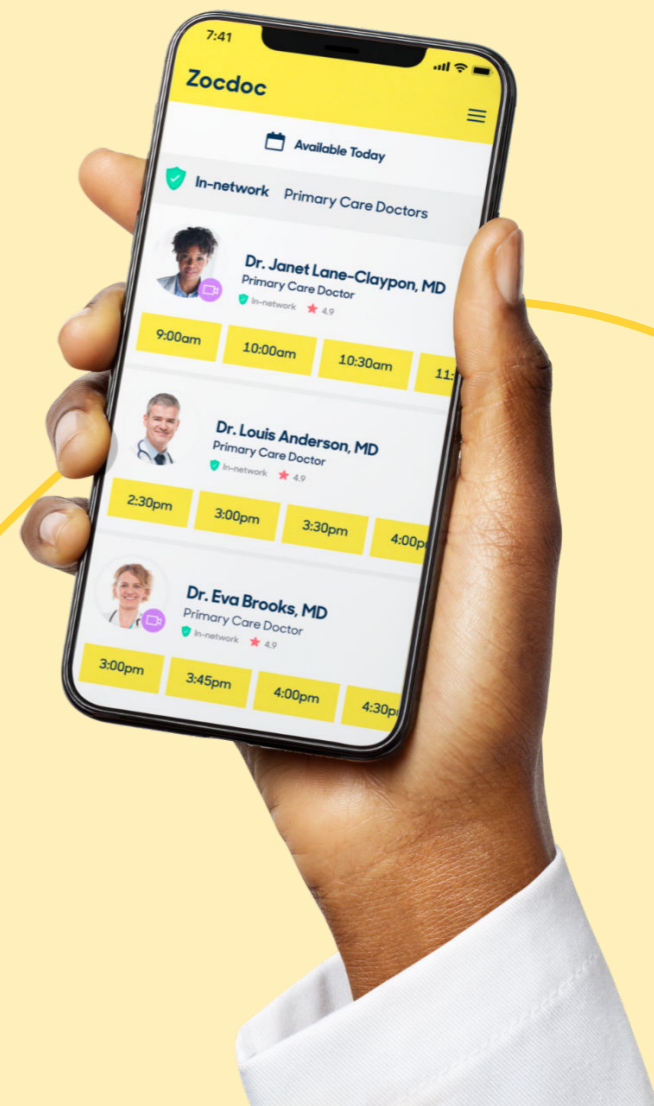
- 01.** Understand the value of loyal patients: Make the best first impression possible with a patient-centric strategy.
- 02.** Prioritize availability (so it never falls below average).
- 03.** Reduce friction in the booking process with a seamless mobile experience.
- 04.** Choose the best visit modality for your specialty (in-person, virtual, or hybrid).
- 05.** List hospital affiliation when applicable.

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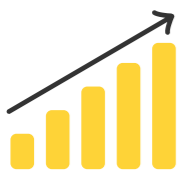
Get in touch today for more advice on reaching and retaining loyal patients.

## About Zocdoc

Zocdoc is the largest marketplace for booking healthcare. Today, millions of patients per month use the Zocdoc app and website to independently discover and instantly book in-person and video visit appointments online. Over 100,000 providers across the United States use Zocdoc as a digital marketing channel to reach new patients, fill last-minute openings, and deliver a better healthcare experience to patients.



## Why providers love Zocdoc



### Reach new patients

Millions of patients visit our website and app every month to search for a local provider.



### Fill last-minute openings

Almost half of Zocdoc appointments occur within 72 hours of booking.



### Pay for bookings, not clicks

Lower risk than when you are paying for clicks, impressions or re-acquiring existing patients.



### Capture bookings from your website

Use Zocdoc's technology with your branding to convert your website traffic to bookings.



### No signup or setup fees

There are no upfront or setup costs, just a one-time fee for each new patient booking.

Request a demo at  
[zocdoc.com/about/join](https://zocdoc.com/about/join)