

Search Engine Marketing & Optimisation

For Healthcare, Pharmaceutical & Medical Businesses



Introduction

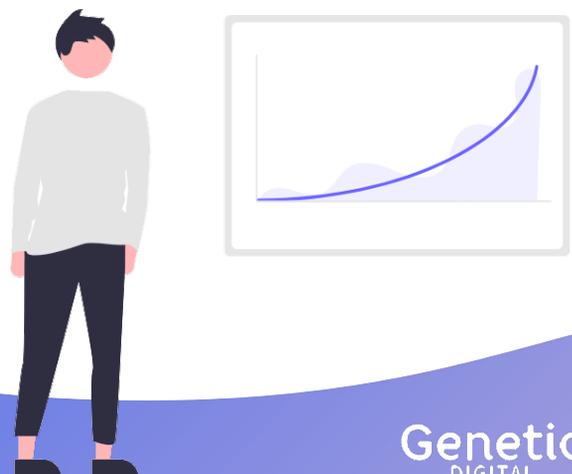
The search engine is now probably the most widely used research tool used by both patients and healthcare professionals alike when looking for health and medical related information. Around 80% of people will start their online session at a search engine. Therefore, search engine marketing and optimisation (SEO) offers many benefits for organisations looking for a highly targeted and measurable form of marketing to help raise awareness, disseminate information, educate audiences as well as promoting products and services.



This paper aims to help CEOs, Directors, Marketing & Product Managers within Healthcare, Pharmaceutical and Medical organisations understand all the different elements and benefits of paid and organic search engine marketing and how these digital tactics can be applied in highly regulated environments to help reach and interact with their target audiences.

Digital Health – It's Global

All over the globe the Internet is widely recognised as a vital tool for healthcare sectors to focus on as part of a building a digital health infrastructure. These e-health initiatives are all about using web and mobile technologies to transmit, store and retrieve digital data. The Digital Health market was valued at US\$25.48bn in 2022. Revenue is expected to show an annual growth rate (CAGR 2022-2027) of 9.87%, resulting in a projected market volume of US\$40.79bn by 2027. The World Health Organisation's (WHO) 'Global strategy on digital health 2020-2025'



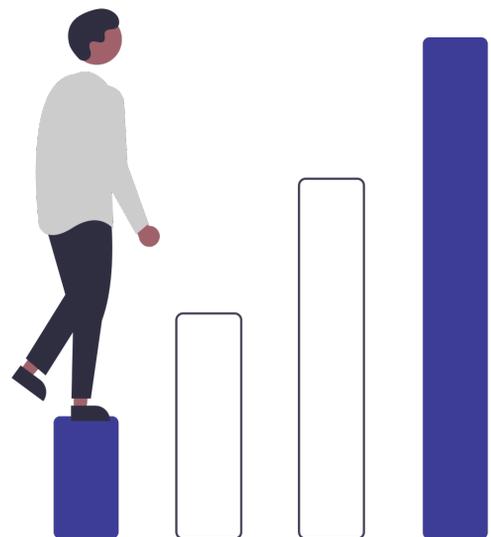
‘Global strategy on digital health 2020-2025’ states: **“Digital health should be an integral part of health priorities and benefit people in a way that is ethical, safe, secure, reliable, equitable and sustainable. It should be developed with principles of transparency, accessibility, scalability, replicability, interoperability, privacy, security and confidentiality.”**

Increasingly, consumers engage in health information seeking via the Internet. In the US the number one most trusted source of information is physicians (62%). The second most trusted source is the Internet (57%). In Europe these figures are 85% for physicians and 75% for Internet. So, clearly the Internet must be seen as an important channel for communicating with your target audiences. However, most pharma and healthcare companies still invest less than 10% of their marketing budgets on digital and search will probably get a small percentage of that, somewhere in the region of 2-3%.

The Internet & Healthcare Info

“The UK is clearly relying on Dr. Google and that trend is set to grow due to the increasing pressures on our NHS”

In the UK people are increasingly looking online to assess their health as they find it harder to get a doctor's appointment. Figures compiled by private UK healthcare provider, Benenden Health, showed that 7% of Google searches in 2019 were health-related – that’s around 70,000 per minute. A 2020 survey titled: Googling Our Health Symptoms revealed that 59% of ‘Brits’ Google their symptoms before going to see a healthcare professional and 23% of individuals rarely or never follow-up with a doctor. However, 59% of these individuals Googling their symptoms make sure the site they visit is a credible source first, but 9% are still just clicking on the first search result.



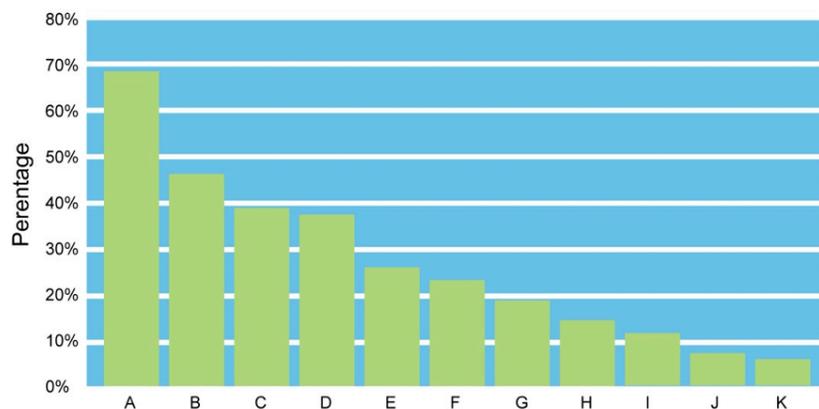
Search engines are the most visited sites on the Web

Most searches for health-related information will take place via the major search engines, Google, Bing or Yahoo. Searches for specific diseases or medical problems, medical procedures and exercise/fitness related information are the most popular areas being researched online.

Google is by far the most widely used search engine with **92% of searchers using Google** and only 3.3% using Bing and a mere 1.3% using Yahoo. Google clearly dominates the search market and should therefore be the search engine you focus on for your search campaigns.

What are individuals searching for?

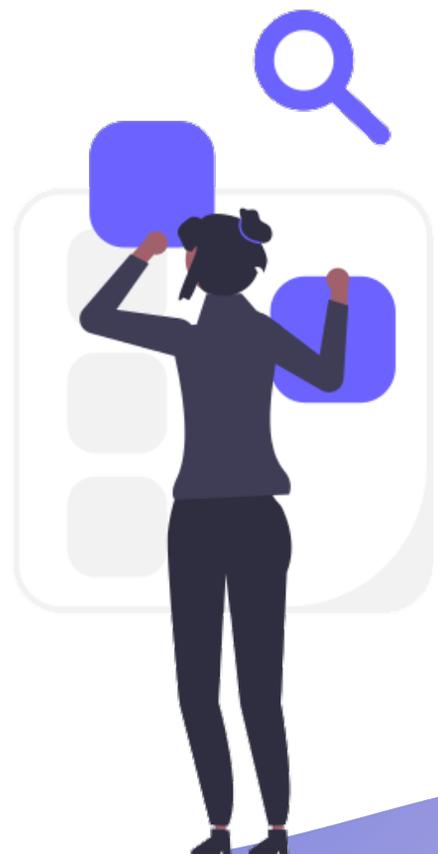
Activities undertaken by individuals who make use of the internet for advice on health, medicine or medical conditions



Key

- A Information on medicines
- B Self-diagnosis
- C Other patients' experiences
- D Information on hospital/clinic
- E Information on doctors
- F Post a comment/question about a health condition
- G Social networking sites (e.g. FaceBook etc) for healthcare info
- H Book an appointment with a doctor
- I Buy prescription medicine
- J Used Twitter to post/read about a healthcare matter
- K None of the above

Source: Bupa Health Pulse 2010 international statistics. 9976 members of the general public in 12 different countries who indicated that they currently make use of the internet to search for advice about health, medicines or medical conditions



According to a study from Treated in 2019 Pneumonia was the most searched health complaint in the UK, as well as depression and diabetes.

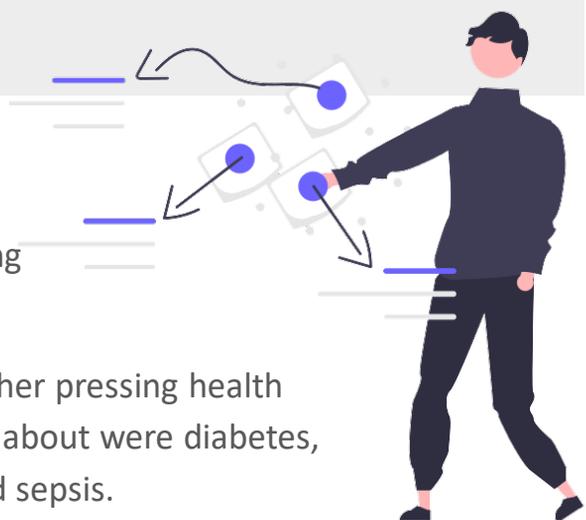
As you'd expect, COVID-19 symptoms, vaccines and side effect related keyword searches dominated the [Google Search Trends Health report in 2021](#).

Here are the Top 10 Pharmacy related searches on Google, according to PharmacyMentor

- Lateral Flow Test
- Pharmacy & PCR Test
- Pharmacy Near Me
- Morning After Pill
- STI's & Sexual Health
- Minor Ailments (Minor ailments cover such a wide range of "Asthma" has 60k monthly searches in the UK. That's more than "Headache" at 40.5k.)
- Ear Wax Removal
- Weight Loss/Management
- Flu Jab/Vaccine

"What is cancer?" was the UK's most googled health question in 2017, according to the publication: [The Scotsman](#).

According to experts at Google Trends, other pressing health issues we visited Dr.Google to learn more about were diabetes, blood pressure, depression, back pain and sepsis.



The Use of Mobile Search

The increasing use of mobile search should also be considered as part of a search engine marketing strategy.

According to a recent report from [Hitwise](#), nearly 60 percent of all Online Searches are now carried out on a mobile device, with some sectors (Food and Beverage) reaching 72 percent.

Hitwise found that 68 percent of all searches to a healthcare website was carried out using a mobile device, while just 39 percent of banking searches came from a mobile device.

Other takeaways from the report include:

- **Mobile searches are more likely to be structured in the form of a question, including words such as "how", "are", "where", and "is".**
- **Breaking news, medical symptoms and product recalls are heavily tilted toward mobile users.**
- **While large purchases may start off with mobile searches, there is a clear transition to desktop searches as users carry out more intense research or conduct the actual transaction.**
- **In what seems to fly in the face of logic, mobile searches tend to be slightly longer (character length) than desktop. For example, the average desktop search that resulted in a visit to Food & Beverage website is 2.2 words or 13.8 characters in length, whereas a mobile search was 2.5 words or 15.5 characters in length.**

In the US, CNN looked at the use of Yahoo and Google via computers and mobile phones to search for health information. Three of the top five web searches originating from mobile phones relate to sexual health, pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Interestingly, STI and sex related health search queries do not appear on Google and Yahoo's top searches via conventional computers. The study suggests that this is because mobile phone web searches are more likely to be carried out by people in their 20s and 30s and it could also be because of the sense of anonymity that comes with using a mobile phone as opposed to a computer.

According to the findings, mobile searches tend to serve a larger role in answering consumers' questions earlier on the purchase journey, with navigational or brand specific searches still more likely to be conducted from a desktop.

On the other hand, location-based searches (i.e. "near me"), are almost exclusively carried out on mobile.

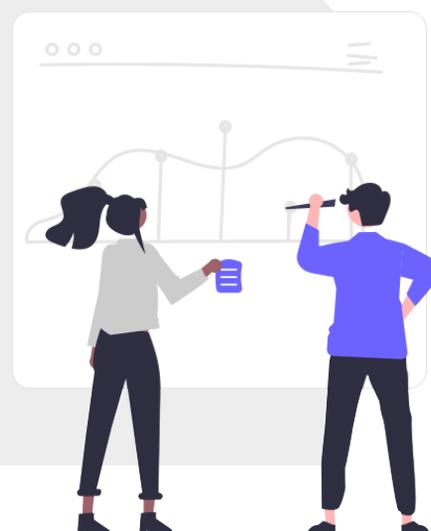
The Age of the Digital Physician

A study was conducted by Hall & Partners to understand how US physicians use the internet and 'Search' in their clinical practices. Each test physician was given a scenario and their online behaviour was tracked in a test environment.

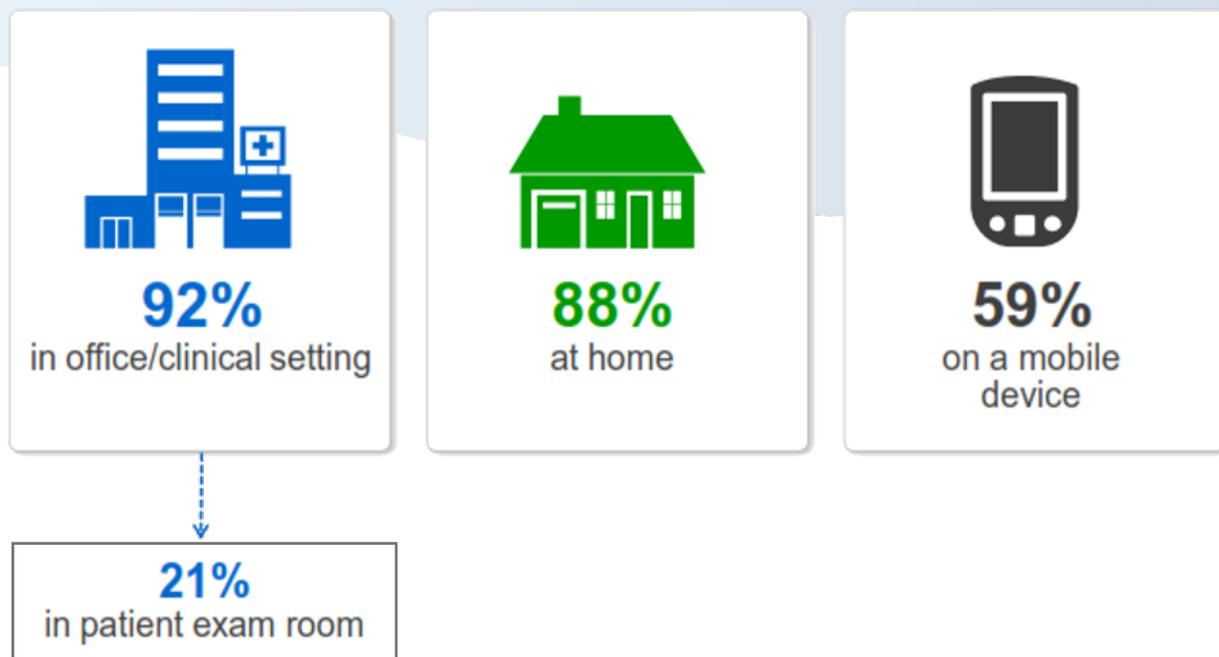
Some of the key results from the study are as follows:

86% of physicians have used the Internet to gather health, medical, or prescription drug information. The Internet far exceeds other resources for gathering health, medical, or prescription drug information:

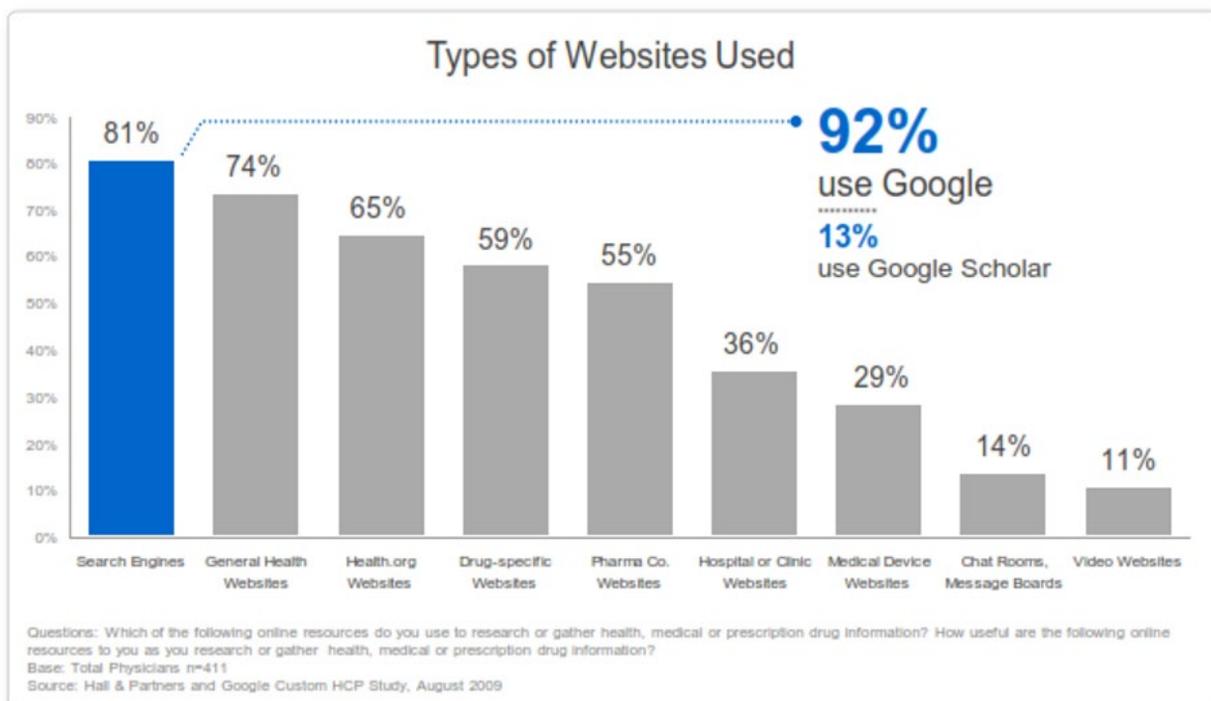
- Training **78%**
- Peer Reviews Journals **77%**
- Pharmaceutical sales representatives **77%**
- Colleagues **67%**
- Books **56%**
- Health-related organization/association **54%**
- Magazines **35%**
- Video/DVDs **20%**



Physicians are also accessing the Internet at home and from their smartphones



Search Engines are the top online resource for many physicians



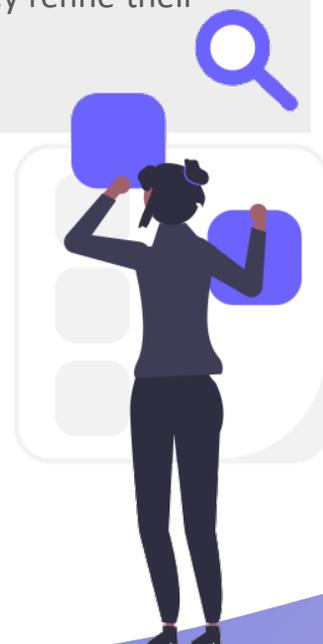
Physicians are searching for information on a variety of topics

 Patient/Conditions		 Drug/Treatments	
General condition information	75%	Specific drug information	77%
Information for patients	61%	Treatment side effects	68%
Information to aid diagnosis	53%	Drug safety information	66%
		New medications	64%
		Contraindications	59%
		Medication in development	45%
		Clinical trial information	45%

The study clearly shows that the Internet is now an integral part of the physician’s clinical practice and Search has transformed the way they research not only specific medical conditions but drugs and medicines too.

- Physicians use the Internet round the clock in short bursts of time
- ‘Search’ is a gateway to online health information but also used throughout the research process
- Physicians find what they are looking for using ‘Search’: Typically they are using three words per search query; they do one search and tend to only view the results on the first page. If they can’t find anything relevant on that front page then they refine their search query.

From a search engine marketing campaign perspective it’s important that marketers create separate physician-specific SEO or PPC campaigns to help reach each target audience. It’s important to include a robust range of keywords, from more general brand and condition terms to more specific ones unlikely to be part of consumer searches.



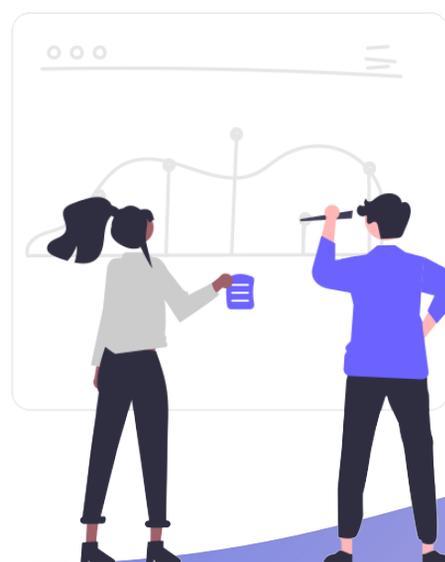
Search Engine Marketing Strategy

Keywords – are you thinking like a patient or health professional?

The most important aspect of any search engine marketing campaign is making sure that you are targeting the right key phrases and using those key phrases intelligently within the content on your website and your other digital assets whether they are, video, images, white papers, or tweets.

Most companies make the mistake of focusing on keywords that they are familiar with internally. The pharma and healthcare sectors are awash with in-house jargon and acronyms. So, when it comes to search you need to put yourself in the shoes of a potential patient/physician/health professional and think about the keywords they might use to find your products and services. Here is an example. Marketing professionals working for a cancer treatment company might be happy to use the word ‘oncology,’ in their material, whereas individuals looking for information on the disease will use the word ‘cancer.’ Another example would be a company promoting the effective relief of ‘Pyrosis.’ Again, it’s unlikely that a consumer will type in “pyrosis relief,” chances are they are more likely to Google “heartburn relief.” However, a physician might indeed use the correct medical term as part of their search query.

The message here is you need to match the content on your site to ‘real’ searches being carried out by your various target audiences. There are a number of [keyword research tools](#) that will give you an idea as to what key phrases people are searching on and their respective volumes. It may also be the case that individuals won’t be aware of your particular product names or brands and will tend to use longer, more descriptive search queries to research a particular drug or medical condition and its treatment. It is important for marketers to understand this shift in search behaviour and to ensure that their keyword strategies take into account the ‘long-tail’.



Long tail keywords are typically 3-6 words in length, but they could be even longer than that as opposed to short tail keywords that are more often 1-2 words in length, sometimes 3 words but used for more general searches.

So, your goal should be to try and think about the different phrases that your target audiences will use to try and seek out information on your products and services. For more information on the 'long-tail' theory visit:

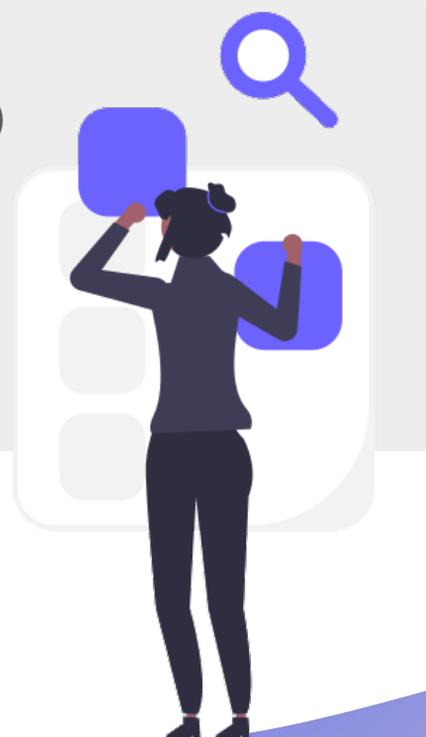
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_Tail

Search Engine Marketing Tactics

There are two key ways in which you can make your business more visible on search engines a) **Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)** and b) **Pay Per Click Advertising (PPC)**. Each area is a massive topic in itself so for this paper I'll take you through the basics of each discipline.

A Google search can often contain many different types of listings:

- **Featured snippets**
- **Google local results 'Map Pack'**
- **Google answers – People Also Ask (PPAs)**
- **Google images**
- **Google news**
- **Google videos**
- **Reviews etc.**



Search Engine Marketing Tactics

Sponsored listings (Ads)



Google search results for "cataract surgeon london".

Search results include:

- Ad - www.eyecliniclondon.com** - 0800 197 8808
Private Cataract Surgery - Video Consult Speeds Up Wait
We understand that the long waitlists for **cataract surgery** after lockdown are frustrating. Take the first step to restoring your vision by booking a safe, at-home video consultation. Warm Personalised Care. Outstanding Results. World **Cataract** Leader. Mr Samer Hamada.
- Ad - www.mrhove.com/london/ophthalmologist** -
Professional Cataract Surgery - Over 400 Happy Patient Reviews
Cataract Removal **Surgery** in **London** with Industry Leading Aftercare. Enquire Today! Gain Freedom from Glasses and Lenses. Your Comfort and Happiness is our Main Priority. Over 15 Years' Experience. Finance Options Available. Fully Trained & Certified.
- Ad - www.optegra.com** -
5* Cataract Surgery London - 5* Facilities & Surgeons
Why wait? Private **Cataract surgery** to rid your **cataract**. Option to lose your glasses too. Latest **cataract** treatments performed by world renowned **surgeons**. 5 star dedicated clinics.
- Ad - www.londoncataractcentre.co.uk** -
Cataract Surgery London - No Wait List Cataract Surgery
Interest Free Finance Available. No NHS Waiting Time. Book Your Free Consultation Today!

Find results on:

- Hotels Uk Com
- Cataract Surgery | Cataract...
- Top Doctors
- The best Ophthalmologists in...

Map Pack:

- London Cataract Centre - Affordable Private Cataract Surgery ...
5.0 ★★★★★ (11) - Surgical center
29a Wimpole St
Open - Closes 9PM - 020 8138 8988
"I recommend London Cataract Centre to everyone."
- Jaheed Khan, Consultant Eye Surgeon, Moorfields Eye Hospital
4.5 ★★★★★ (10) - Eye Care Clinic
9-11, Moorfields Private Eye Hospital, Bath St - In the Moorfields Eye H...
Open - Closes 6PM - 020 7952 2826
"Their website mentions cataract surgery"
- Julian Stevens - Eye Surgeon
4.9 ★★★★★ (153) - Lasik surgeon
Moorfields Private Outpatient Centre, 9-11 Bath Street
Open - Closes 5PM - 020 7251 4835
"I am very pleased with the results of my cataract surgery."

People also ask:

- How much does cataract surgery cost UK?
- Is cataract surgery available on NHS?
- How much does cataract surgery cost in 2020?
- How bad do your cataracts have to be for surgery?

General organic listings:

- www.thelondonclinic.co.uk › treatments › Cataract-surg...
Cataract surgery | The London Clinic
Cataract surgery at The London Clinic is carried out as a day case procedure in our high-tech, ophthalmic operating rooms. The operation is usually performed ...
- mrhove.com › cataract-surgery -
Cataract Surgery | Consultant Ophthalmologist in London
Mr Hove is the founding **cataract surgeon** of the most efficient **cataract surgery** unit in the country. He has personally successfully performed over 5000 **cataract** and refractive procedures. He has received multiple personal recommendations from satisfied patients in both the NHS and the private sector.

'Map Pack' listings



People Also Ask listings - PPAs



General organic listings



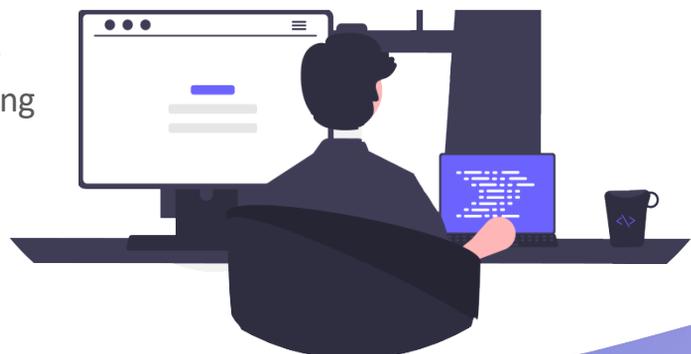
Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

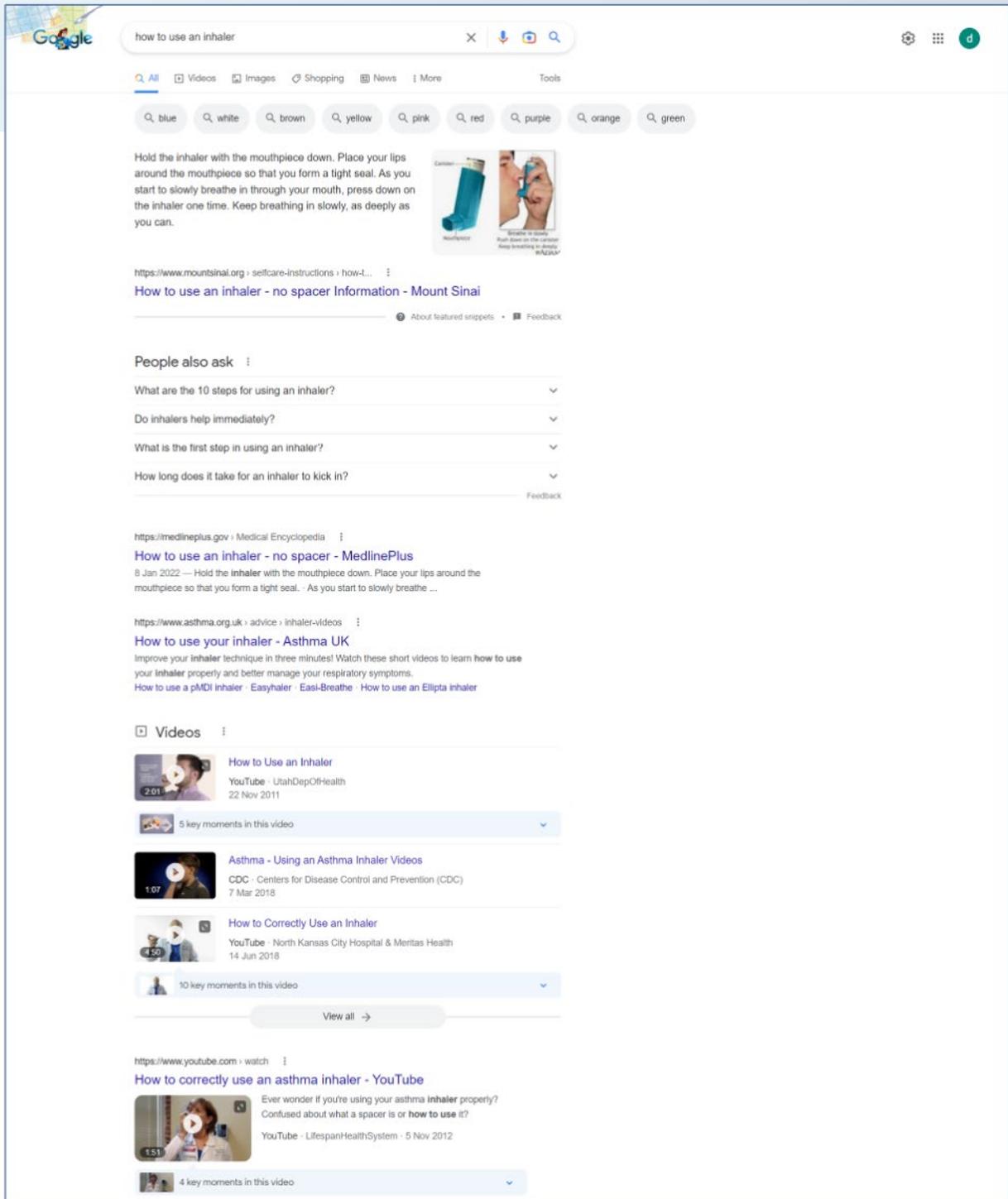
Search engine optimisation (SEO) is the process of improving the visibility of a website or a web page in search engines via the "natural" or un-paid ("organic" or "algorithmic") search results. Other forms of search engine marketing (SEM) target paid listings. In general, the earlier (or higher on the page), and more frequently a site appears in the search results list, the more visitors it will receive from the search engine. SEO may target different kinds of search, including image search, local search, video search, academic search, news search and industry-specific vertical search engines. Around 1 billion people use Google Images daily. Google search stats show that 10.1% of Google traffic is for images.google.com.

As a digital marketing strategy, SEO considers how search engines work, what people search for, the actual search terms typed into search engines and which search engines are preferred by their targeted audience. Optimising a website may involve editing its content, title tags, meta descriptions as well as the actual underlying architecture to help increase its relevance to specific keywords and to remove barriers to the indexing activities of search engines. Promoting a site using content marketing techniques which can help to increase the number of backlinks, or inbound links and social shares is also another SEO tactic.

Video SEO

SEO doesn't just involve optimising web pages. Some healthcare, medical and pharmaceutical businesses are using digital assets like video to interact with their target audience. Optimising video assets that you have created can be a highly effective way of standing out in the search results and interacting with potential customers looking for advice about administering oral medicines for a child. YouTube is now the second largest search engine, so if you have video content on YouTube then it makes sense to optimise it as those assets will have a greater chance of showing up on Google.

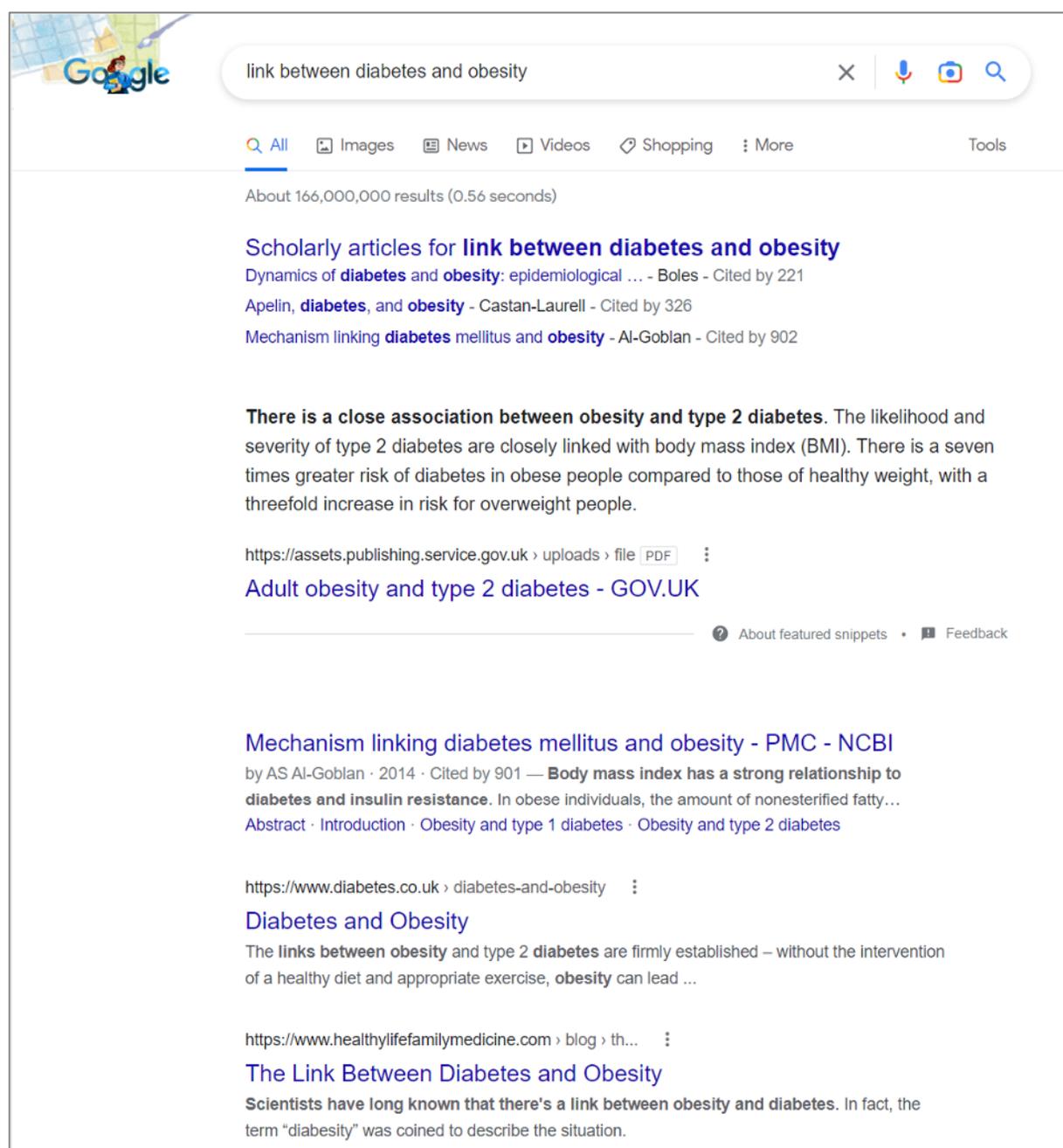




Google Scholar

Another example shows how a search for the condition “link between diabetes and obesity” also displays results for scholarly articles (we often refer to this as ‘academic search’ or ‘Google Scholar’).

Many pharma and healthcare companies produce medical research study papers and reports on clinical trials. Again by optimising these papers for 'academic search/Google Scholar' you can use Google to promote your findings to a more technical audience such as a Physician, GP or Pharmacist. By submitting papers to high authority websites like PubMed you'll improve your chances of those papers being indexed by Google and showing up in the search engine results pages (SERPS).



link between diabetes and obesity

About 166,000,000 results (0.56 seconds)

Scholarly articles for link between diabetes and obesity

Dynamics of **diabetes** and **obesity**: epidemiological ... - Boles - Cited by 221
Apelin, **diabetes**, and **obesity** - Castan-Laurell - Cited by 326
Mechanism linking **diabetes** mellitus and **obesity** - Al-Goblan - Cited by 902

There is a close association between obesity and type 2 diabetes. The likelihood and severity of type 2 diabetes are closely linked with body mass index (BMI). There is a seven times greater risk of diabetes in obese people compared to those of healthy weight, with a threefold increase in risk for overweight people.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk > uploads > file PDF](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/uploads/file/PDF)

Adult obesity and type 2 diabetes - GOV.UK

About featured snippets • Feedback

Mechanism linking diabetes mellitus and obesity - PMC - NCBI

by AS Al-Goblan · 2014 · Cited by 901 — **Body mass index has a strong relationship to diabetes and insulin resistance.** In obese individuals, the amount of nonesterified fatty...
[Abstract](#) · [Introduction](#) · [Obesity and type 1 diabetes](#) · [Obesity and type 2 diabetes](#)

[https://www.diabetes.co.uk > diabetes-and-obesity](https://www.diabetes.co.uk/diabetes-and-obesity)

Diabetes and Obesity

The **links between obesity** and type 2 **diabetes** are firmly established – without the intervention of a healthy diet and appropriate exercise, **obesity** can lead ...

[https://www.healthylifefamilymedicine.com > blog > th...](https://www.healthylifefamilymedicine.com/blog/th...)

The Link Between Diabetes and Obesity

Scientists have long known that there's a link between obesity and diabetes. In fact, the term "diabetesity" was coined to describe the situation.

Voice Search

Siri (Apple), Google Home and Alexa (Amazon Echo) are all popular voice search assistants. According to Comscore, 50 % of all searches this in 2022 will be voice searches. We are clearly towards the end of the transition and adjustment phase with voice search and just like smartphones, voice search is fast becoming a daily part of our lives, replacing the traditional way of searching using a keyboard.

The vast majority of voice searches are question based so Google will prefer to select a page that contains both the question and answer. This is where a good old-fashioned FAQs page can really help your site perform well for voice related searches.

Make a record of the common questions that are being asked by your target audience and include them on your site. For example, if you're a surgeon and a lot of your patients want to know how long the recovery time is going to be you could add the following question and answer on your website: Q. How long will it take for me to fully recover from the surgery? And then include an answer to that question with details of the recovery process. Repeat the process for other questions and then build an FAQs page into your website.

Google Local

According to Hubspot 46% of all Google searches are local. The same article revealed that 60% of the people who search for local business use smartphones. Local SEO involves optimising your healthcare office, clinic or practice for location specific keywords, such as "Dentist in Tunbridge Wells".

However, searchers are also using phrases like "dentists near me" and Google reliably serves up relevant results that match the location of the searcher. When it comes to health, local convenience is key and in the past two years, "Near me" searches have witnessed exponential growth, with many of the searches being conducted from mobile devices and through voice assistants like Alexa and Google Home.



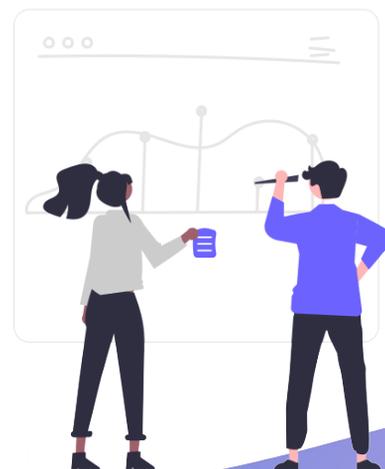
Local search engine optimisation includes optimising your website as well as your Google My Business and Bing Places listings. Google Health boss David Feinberg said that around 7 per cent of Google's daily searches were health related, equivalent to 70,000 every minute. So, if you haven't claimed your local listing on Google and haven't optimised your site for location specific key phrases then you're going to be missing out on a large potential traffic source. According to Google "near me" searches for health-related services have doubled since 2015.

Algorithm Updates

The Google search algorithm is being updated all the time, and it's these changes which help the search engine to constantly improve the quality of its search results. There have been a number of "game-changing" algorithm updates over the last twelve months, which keeps online marketers and SEOs on their toes. It's up to us to understand these updates and change our strategies to suit.

Key Major Google Updates

E-E-A-T. On the 15th December, 2022 Google made significant changes to its Quality Rater Guidelines (QRG) for search, including the introduction of the concept of E-E-A-T, which stands for Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness. The addition of "experience" to the acronym suggests that content quality can be evaluated based on the extent to which the creator has first-hand experience in the topic. For example, if you are looking for information on how to use your inhaler, you may want content produced by an expert in medicines such as a pharmacist. However, if you are looking for reviews on your local pharmacy, you may want to see content from people who have experience with using their services. So, being able to demonstrate that you are an expert in a particular subject matter is even more key. Google has also provided more clear examples of concepts such as evaluating the reputation of websites and content contributors, how much E-E-A-T matters for different topics, and what constitutes harmful content.



The update also includes more inclusive language and a granular approach to addressing common questions about E-E-A-T, as well as mentions of social media platforms and influencers. Other significant changes to the QRG include updated guidance on identifying who operates a website and who creates the content on it, as well as a focus on the reputation of both the website and its content creators.

Helpful Content Update (August, 2022). The helpful content update is all about rewarding content that provide website visitors with a satisfying and positive end-user experience. So content that doesn't meet a visitor's expectations won't perform as well in the search results. This update rewards people-first content and devalues content written specifically for search engines. A lot of healthcare organisations that have created lots of blog posts with low value content that is stuffed with keywords will have been negatively impacted by this update.

Google **"Medic" Core Update (August, 2018).** Google rolled out an algorithm update to more effectively measure the Expertise, Authority, and Trustworthiness (**E-A-T**) of websites that impact someone's health, happiness, safety, or financial stability, known as Your Money or Your Life (YMYL) sites. Google's mission was to seek out medical and health-related sites that lack authority and could pose a **misdiagnosis threat**.

For these "YMYL" pages, Google assumes that users expect them to operate with their strictest standards of trustworthiness and safety. As such, where their algorithms detect that a user's query relates to a "YMYL" topic, Google will give more weight in their ranking systems to factors like our understanding of the authoritativeness, expertise, or trustworthiness of the pages we present in response."

What this means in plain English is that Google is tweaking its ranking algorithm for queries relating to the pharma, healthcare and medical industries to make sure that those set of search results comply with the "strictest standards of trustworthiness and safety."



Furthermore, this means that any successful SEO tactics implemented on a site from one industry sector, can't just be replicated on another type of site in a different industry and be assumed to achieve the same level of success. As a result, many websites with low-quality medical content or lacking relevant expertise suffered a crash in search engine rankings.

Other past key updates include:

Penguin

The Google Penguin update targeted websites which had a disproportionate amount of single anchor text links, and also targeted blog networks which aimed to manipulate the search index. The algorithm has been refined to give priority to websites with a varied and natural-looking link portfolio, with a mixture of citations, anchor text links and branded links.



For this reason, and especially for sites that were “penguined”, it's more important than ever to build a diverse link portfolio using a range of SEO tactics. This can include branded links and URL links as well as the keyword-rich anchor text links which were prioritised in the past. Sites with a huge number of almost identical links will be flagged by Google as suspicious.

Panda – Low Quality Content

The Panda update was rolled-out in 2011, and targeted low-quality content and content farms which hosted low quality content. These content farms had been used by online marketers to manipulate the search index with high volumes of low-quality content. These sites ranked well in the search index until the Panda update came along.

Post-Panda, great onsite content is increasingly important, and building genuine editorial links back to a website is the most effective way of improving its rankings in the search results. Engaging with real people and creating genuinely engaging and interesting content will produce the kind of links which make the difference and build an online reputation.

Personalised Search & Google Reviews

One of the biggest changes to search in recent years is personalised search. For logged-in Google users, it means that previously visited sites are far more likely to appear near the top of subsequent search results.

Personalised Search is helping to tailor individual's search results to their own specifications. It's great news for individuals but it makes search engine optimisation a lot more complicated. It means that having a content-rich website with helpful and informative content is even more important than ever, since attracting a customer at an earlier stage in the buying cycle will mean they are much more likely to return at a later date to buy or convert. Engaging users at an earlier stage in the buying cycle means providing genuinely useful information which can help inform their purchases.

A comprehensive timeline of all historical Google updates can be found here: <https://www.searchenginejournal.com/google-algorithm-history>

Google Reviews

Google Reviews do help to improve search rankings and overall SEO efforts. While there are a lot of factors involved in search rankings, online customer reviews can be a strong signal to search engines that communicates trustworthiness and authority. In an era in which competition has gotten tougher for many businesses on the web, managing online reviews is a way to differentiate your business and raise your visibility in the search results.

Social Signals

It's increasingly acknowledged in the SEO community that social signals are playing an increasingly important role in search rankings. Social content has been integrated into the search index in various ways in the past, and it seems highly likely that there's some SEO benefit to maintaining a strong and optimised social media profile and posting highly relevant and informative content that your target audience will interact with.



Investing in SEO

Search engine optimisation requires a great deal of patience and, like all marketing activity, it should be approached with the view that it is about making continuous improvements as opposed to achieving perfection. The process of improving your positions in Google is a complex one and depending on how much activity you have carried out relative to your competitors will determine how quickly you will see results from your SEO efforts. SEO should be viewed as a long term and ongoing investment. However, if executed properly the return on investment from this activity will be significant.

SEO activities generally involve content development and promotion of a brand, company or products, and as such can be seen as part of an over-arching digital marketing strategy which seeks to build a brand reputation and awareness.

Pay Per Click Advertising (PPC)

Pay for click advertising (PPC) or paid search as it is often referred to is an alternative approach to getting your web pages found in the search results.

Google Adwords is still the most popular paid search platform but other search engines like Bing have their own network and LinkedIn also offers a PPC a model.

Google has a number of restrictions around the promotion of certain types of healthcare products, services and medicines. You can view those restrictions by country at:

<http://adwords.google.com/support/aw/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=176031>

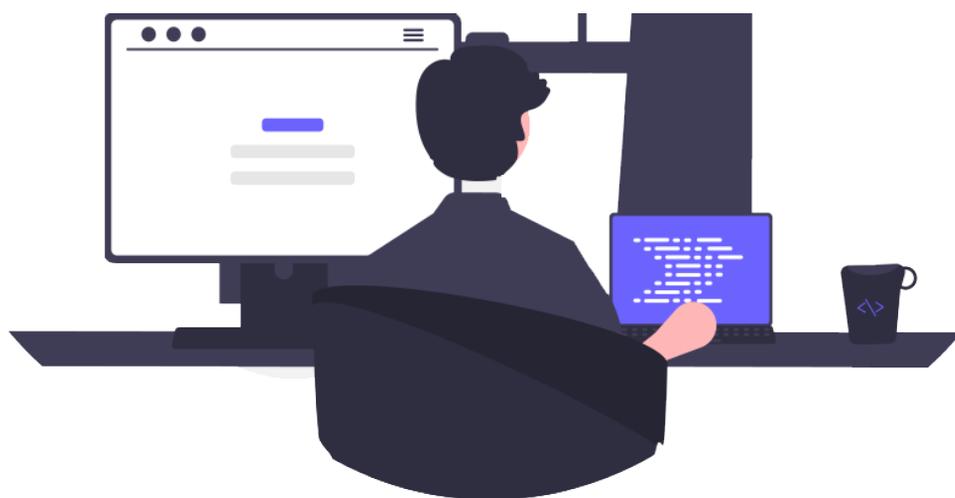
How does PPC work?

When a searcher types specific keywords (or search phrases) into a search engine, the search engine will separate the paid listings from the unpaid listings when calling up the results. Pay-per-click advertising is an agreement between a search engine and a business or advertising firm that enables them to place a small ad on the right-hand side, or top left-hand side, of the results page, for certain keywords.

The number of other people targeting the category and search terms that you have selected will dictate how much you will have to pay each time someone clicks on one of your links/adverts. Generally, the more competitive your term(s), the more your click(s) will cost. That said, however, it's also important to bear in mind that the search engines will give your site a quality score based on the relevancy of your advert. The better the quality score that your site receives, the lower you will have to pay for relevant clicks.

In some ways, pay-per-click marketing is similar to search engine optimisation (SEO). Keyword research, competitive analysis and constant monitoring and tweaking are required to streamline the campaign to achieve maximum return on investment (ROI) for minimum cost. The primary difference between SEO and PPC is that a pay-per-click advertising campaign is more likely to generate faster results for your website - whereas SEO processes may take many months to improve your site's rankings on the search engines. With PPC it is possible to generate measurable results within just days.

However, over the past few years pay per click advertising has become more widely adopted as a marketing tactic and this in turn has increased the level of competition for certain key phrases. This has resulted in the bid prices for high volume keywords increasing quite significantly and as a result some businesses are struggling to generate a positive return on their paid search investment. Consequently, they are looking longer term and investing more of their marketing budget into search engine optimisation.



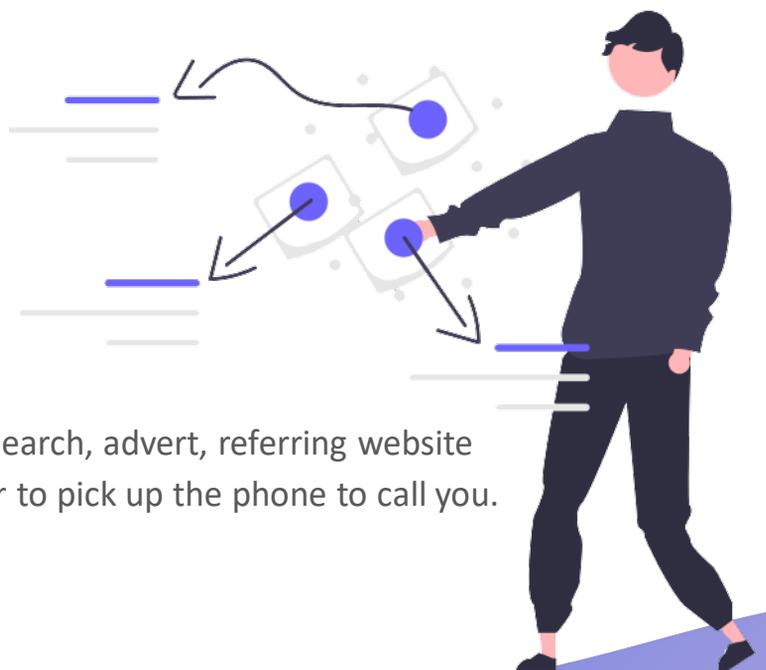
Tracking & Measuring ROI

Using tools like Google Analytics (GA4) and Google Tag Manager, helps you to measure the volume of visitors to your site and also their behaviours on your site. Using these tools and integrating them with Google Looker (formerly Data Studio) you can create your own customised reports so you can more easily measure the impact of your PPC and SEO activities. You can generate reports showing you not just only website traffic, but PDF downloads and enquiries etc. With Google analytics you can even integrate the software with CRM systems like Sales Force, Marketo and Hubspot. Google also offer a host of other MarTech tools to help you optimise your digital marketing channels.

The ability to track campaigns at a granular level gives the marketing function the ability to fine tune campaigns and focus their budget on the areas that are contributing the most to helping them achieve sales and marketing objectives.

For instance, you can track which websites or search engines are referring visitors to your site. You can even track which individual key phrases are driving visitors to your site and what the conversion rate is for each key phrase, i.e. what percentage of those visitors go on to carry out a positive action, such as make an enquiry, sign-up to an email newsletter or download a PDF product information pack. You can also measure the number of repeat visits made by an individual and analyse what pages are most and least viewed.

With newer technology such as 'call analytics' you can track exactly what each visitor is doing on your website and even when they pick up the phone to call you. With this level of tracking you are able to report on the exact visitor path, including what the visitor did on your website, before, during and after the phone call. You now have the ability to report on which keyword search, advert, referring website and click caused your website visitor to pick up the phone to call you.



The ability to accurately measure the effectiveness of various digital marketing assets and campaigns is one of the most useful tools for the modern-day marketer. At a time when marketing budgets are being cut and marketers are being forced to achieve the same or even higher ROI on lower budgets, investing in web analytics enables you to get a 360-degree picture on what is performing well and more importantly what is not, so you can tweak it, or ditch it.

Closing Thoughts

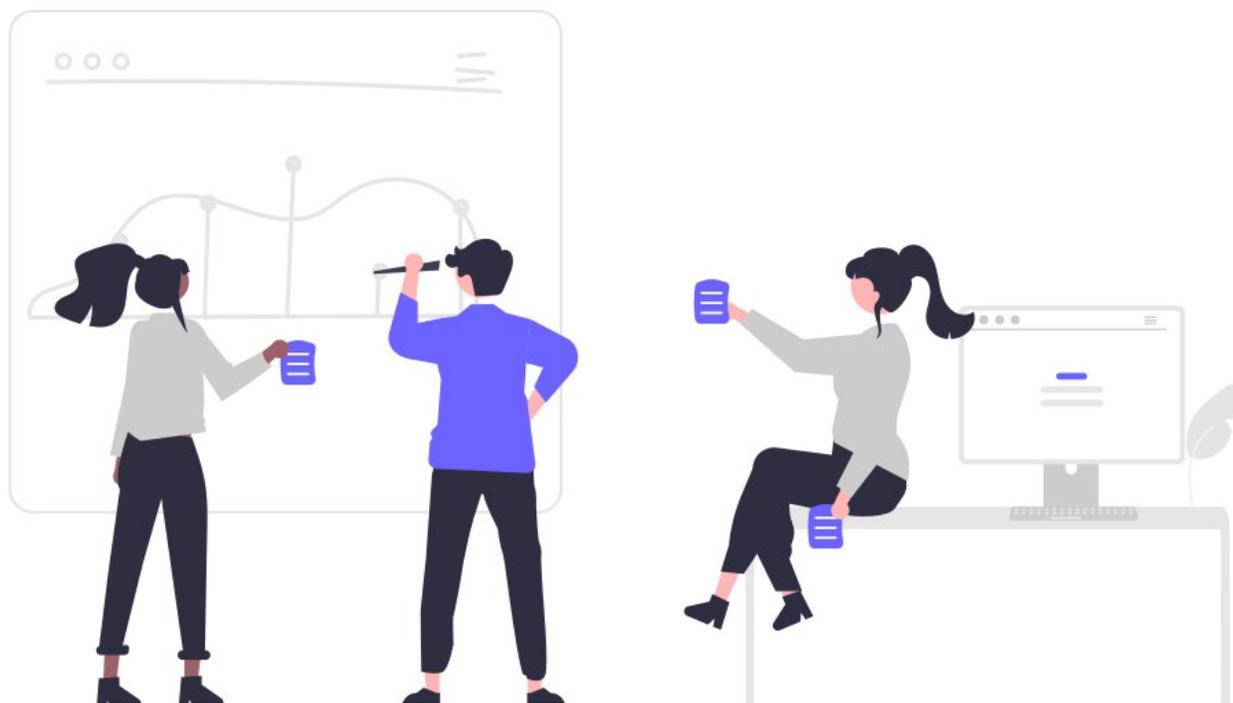
Research from reports provide real evidence that the Web is being extensively used to research and buy healthcare related products and services online. The tight regulations that surround this sector especially those from the Medicines Act and the PMCPA, ABPI code may make it harder for certain pharmaceutical, medical and healthcare businesses to take advantage of the customer attraction opportunities that search engine marketing presents. However, with a bit of creative thinking there are search marketing solutions that can be applied to help these businesses overcome such hurdles and take advantage of the traffic generating potential of 'Search'.

We've highlighted that 'Search' is much more than simply optimising individual web pages. Search engines are now able to index and display a variety of digital assets in their results - like video, medical papers, images and tweets. Faster download speeds (and 5G) have also encouraged web surfers to download more online videos via their mobile devices and this area of digital communication offers a truly interactive and engaging experience.

With the volume of online videos growing significantly, video and YouTube optimisation is most certainly a key aspect of SEO and it can often help you to gain visibility for keywords that your web pages would struggle to rank for. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Ipsos OTX consumers were asked the question: *"Thinking about online videos in general, which, if any, of the following types of videos do you typically watch on the Internet?"* The top video category was 'News' at 42%, 'Health' came in second at 32% above the categories 'Food' and 'Celebrity'. As a marketer it's important that you look to research all the various vertical search engines that exist and consider whether or not they should be part of your overall search marketing mix.

The growing use of mobile search is an area that must also not be understated. As the mobile phone makers continuously improve the browsing capabilities of their handsets, more and more mobile phone users are enjoying the convenience and anonymity that searching and browsing the web via their smartphone offers. And if the predictions of the Ipsos report are correct – this is a trend that will only continue to grow. Including mobile optimisation in your online & search marketing strategy now will put you ahead of the game.

It's not only consumers that are using the Web and search engines like Google to look for health and medical related information. As we have seen from some of the studies cited, physicians are also using search engines to look for more information about a particular condition or disease and for specific medical information and tools/medical devices to aid a diagnosis or to help their patients manage a particular illness more effectively. Furthermore, they are also using search engines to seek out clinical trial information and for researching specific drugs and new medicines. The more that you can engage with them, intelligently, in this space, the better chance you have of influencing decision-makers at the point of prescription.



About The Author



Damon Lightley is a co-founder of Genetic Digital. He has been involved in the digital marketing sector since 1997. His areas of expertise include developing digital strategy, search engine marketing & optimisation and digital analytics.

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About Genetic Digital

Genetic Digital is a [healthcare and pharma digital marketing agency](#) that specialises in **identifying, creating** and **promoting** the most valuable **digital assets** that will enable healthcare, medical and pharmaceutical brands to **optimise** their **online presence**.

What sets us apart is our working knowledge of the various compliance procedures that many of our clients have to adhere to and our ability to help them identify which digital assets they should focus on creating and how to best get them noticed by their target audiences, be they healthcare professionals, patients or carers.

By thinking strategically and asking the right questions along the way we will ensure that every digital solution we implement delivers maximum impact for your organisation.

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