

THINKBIG MEDIA

COMPLETE GUIDE

Fill Your Waiting Room: The SEO Guide

The complete SEO playbook for health practices. How to rank for the searches that lead to bookings, build content that patients and AI trust, and maintain it in under an hour a month.

thinkbigmedia.com.au

2026 Edition

What this guide will do for you

SEO for health practices is different from SEO for e-commerce, software, or media companies. Your patients aren't browsing for entertainment... they're searching with intent. They have a problem, they're looking for a specific type of help, they're in a specific location, and they're making a considered decision about who to trust with their health.

That intent-driven, location-specific, trust-dependent context shapes everything about how SEO works for you. This guide is built entirely around that context.

76%

of people who search for
a local business visit
within 24 hours

46%

of all Google searches
have local intent... "near
me," suburb name, or city

3x

more likely to book:
patients who found a
practice via search vs.
paid social

The practices that consistently fill their books through search aren't doing anything exotic. They have their basics dialled... their Google Business Profile is optimised, their website is clearly structured, they publish useful content consistently... and they maintain it. This guide covers exactly that, in the right order.

How search works for health practices

Before optimising anything, understand what you're optimising for. Health practice SEO operates across three distinct search environments, and each requires a different approach.

The three search environments

Local pack (Google Maps). The three practices that appear in a box at the top of search results for queries like "physiotherapist Gold Coast" or "women's health GP near me." This is driven primarily by your Google Business Profile. For most practices, this is the highest-value real estate on Google.

Organic results. The standard blue-link search results below the local pack. Driven by your website's content, structure, and authority. Takes longer to build but delivers consistent, compounding traffic.

AI search (AEO... Answer Engine Optimisation). ChatGPT, Perplexity, Google's AI Overview, and similar tools are now answering health questions and recommending practitioners. Being surfaced in these responses is the newest and fastest-growing channel.

WHERE TO START

If you've done nothing on SEO yet, start with your Google Business Profile (Chapter 2). It has the fastest impact and the lowest time investment. Then build your website structure (Chapter 4), then content (Chapter 5). AI search (Chapter 6) follows naturally from getting the first three right.

How patients actually search

Understanding search intent is more important than chasing keyword volume. Patients searching for health services typically fall into three intent categories:

- **Booking intent:** "physiotherapist [suburb]," "book women's health physio Brisbane"... ready to book, looking for the right practice
- **Information intent:** "how long does it take to recover from ACL surgery," "what is pelvic floor physiotherapy"... early stage, building understanding
- **Comparison intent:** "best osteopath [city]," "physiotherapy vs chiropractic for lower back"... evaluating options

Booking-intent searches should land on your service pages or homepage... pages designed to convert. Information-intent searches should land on blog articles or resource pages that build trust and introduce your practice. Most practices only have the first type of page and miss the trust-building opportunities entirely.

Google Business Profile: your most important SEO asset

Your Google Business Profile (GBP) is the single highest-impact SEO asset a local health practice has. A fully optimised profile with consistent reviews will outrank a well-built website in local search results.

The complete GBP optimisation checklist

- Business name matches your legal/trading name exactly... no keyword stuffing

- Primary category is the most specific available (e.g. "Women's Health Clinic" not just "Health")

- Secondary categories added for all services offered (up to 9 additional)

- Business description: 750 characters, uses primary keywords naturally, describes who you help and how

- Address is correct and matches your website exactly (street number, abbreviations)

- Phone number is a local number where possible (local numbers rank better than 1300)

- Website URL linked and working

- Opening hours are accurate and kept up to date

- Appointment booking link added

- Services added with descriptions for each

- Attributes filled in (accessibility, LGBTQ+ friendly, languages spoken, etc.)

- At least 10 photos: exterior, interior, treatment rooms, team headshots

- Google Posts published in the last 7 days

- Questions and Answers section populated with your own FAQs

- Minimum 15 reviews, with responses to all of them

Writing your GBP description

1. Open with who you serve: "We're a women's health physiotherapy practice serving the Northern Beaches..."
2. Name your core services: "We specialise in pelvic floor rehabilitation, pre and postnatal physiotherapy, and..."
3. State your approach: "Our approach combines..." or "We believe that..."
4. Include your location keywords naturally: "[suburb], [city], [nearby landmark if relevant]"
5. End with a call to action: "Book online or call us to discuss how we can help."

Reviews: the most powerful ranking factor you control

Google's local algorithm weighs review quantity, recency, and sentiment heavily. A practice with 80 recent reviews will consistently outrank a practice with better technical SEO but only

15 older reviews.

AHPRA note: You can encourage patients to leave reviews. You cannot incentivise reviews (no discounts, gifts, or rewards in exchange). You cannot control review content... but you can respond to every review, which signals to Google that the profile is actively managed.

REVIEW REQUEST SYSTEM

The most effective approach: ask at the end of an appointment ("If you found today's session helpful, a Google review makes a real difference for us... here's a direct link"). A QR code on a small card at reception that links directly to your review page converts significantly better than a follow-up email.

Keyword strategy for health practices

Keyword research for health practices is not about finding the highest-volume terms. It's about finding the terms your ideal patients actually use when they're ready to book, and making sure your website appears for those specific searches.

The three keyword tiers

TIER	EXAMPLE	INTENT	WHERE TO TARGET
Tier 1 Core service + location	"physiotherapist Gold Coast"	Booking	Homepage, GBP
Tier 2 Specific service + location	"pelvic floor physio Brisbane northside"	Booking	Service pages
Tier 3 Condition + location	"postnatal physio near Newtown"	Local	Service pages, GBP
Tier 4 Informational queries	"how long does pelvic floor recovery take"	Informational	Blog articles

How to find your keywords without paid tools

1. **Google autocomplete:** Type your core service + city into Google and note every suggestion. These are real searches people make.
2. **Google "People also ask":** The PAA box on any search result shows related questions. These become your blog article topics.
3. **Google "Related searches":** At the bottom of results pages. More keyword variations.
4. **Competitors:** Search your primary keywords. What are the top-ranking practices' page titles and headings? These reveal what's working.
5. **Your patients:** Ask your front desk what questions new patients ask most often. Those questions are keyword opportunities.

LOCATION KEYWORD STRATEGY

Target your suburb, the adjacent suburbs patients realistically travel from, and your city. Separate service pages for separate locations only make sense if you have multiple physical locations... for a single practice, consolidate location references on each service page rather than creating thin duplicate pages.

On-page optimisation: structuring your website for search

On-page SEO is about ensuring each page of your website clearly communicates its topic to Google... through page titles, headings, content, and structure. Most practice websites have significant on-page issues that are quick to fix once you know what to look for.

The page optimisation checklist

Apply this to every key page: homepage, each service page, about page, and contact page.

- Page title (60 chars max):** Includes primary keyword + location. Format: "Service | Practice Name | Suburb"

- Meta description (155 chars max):** Describes the page and includes a call to action. Doesn't directly affect rankings but heavily influences click-through rate.

- H1 heading:** One per page. Includes the primary keyword. Reads naturally for humans first.

- H2/H3 headings:** Break up the content. Include secondary keywords where natural.

- First paragraph:** Mentions the primary keyword within the first 100 words.

Content length: Service pages should be at least 500 words. Thin pages rank poorly.

Images: All images have descriptive alt text including keywords where relevant.

Internal links: Each page links to at least 2 other relevant pages on your site.

NAP consistency: Your Name, Address, Phone number appear on every page and match your GBP exactly.

Schema markup: LocalBusiness schema added to your homepage (or ask your web developer... this is a 30-minute job).

Mobile: Site works correctly on mobile. Test at pagespeed.web.dev.

Speed: Page loads in under 3 seconds. Check at pagespeed.web.dev.

Service page structure that converts and ranks

Every service page should answer four questions in order:

1. **Who is this for?** (The patient's situation, in their language)
2. **What do we do?** (The service, described plainly)
3. **Why us?** (Your specific approach, credentials, experience)
4. **What's the next step?** (One clear call to action)

Avoid leading with clinical descriptions. "Pelvic floor physiotherapy involves assessment and treatment of the pelvic floor musculature" tells Google what the page is about but gives a patient no reason to keep reading. Lead with the patient's situation: "If you've been told to 'just do your Kegels' and it's not working, you're probably not alone... and there's a reason for that."

Content strategy: what to write and how

Content is the long game of SEO. A well-structured content strategy compounds over time... each article adds another keyword target, another trust signal, another reason for Google to rank your practice, and another way for patients to find you at the research stage of their decision.

The content types that work for health practices

Condition explainers. "What is [condition]?" articles that explain a condition in plain language, its causes, how it's treated, and what the patient can expect. High search volume, high trust-building value, and they surface in AI search responses.

Treatment guides. "What to expect from [treatment]" articles. These attract booking-intent patients who are researching before they commit. Writing these also demonstrates expertise to Google and to patients alike.

FAQ articles. Answer the five most common questions you get asked at your practice. These directly match informational search queries and appear frequently in Google's "People also ask" feature.

Comparison articles. "Physio vs. chiropractic for lower back pain," "Osteopathy vs. physiotherapy... what's the difference." These capture comparison-intent searchers at a critical decision point and position your practice as knowledgeable and transparent.

One high-quality article per month consistently outperforms four thin articles in a burst. Google rewards consistency and depth. Write less, write better, publish on a predictable schedule.

How to write an article that ranks

1. **Start with the search query:** write the article for the patient who typed that search, not for practitioners who already know the answer
2. **Answer the question in the first paragraph:** don't make readers scroll to find the answer. Google's AI Overview pulls from pages that answer clearly and quickly.
3. **Use the patient's language:** "back pain" not "lumbar spine dysfunction." Write how patients speak, not how clinicians document.
4. **Include your location naturally:** "At our [suburb] practice, we see a lot of patients who..." integrates local keywords without stuffing.
5. **Link to your service page:** every article should include a contextual link to the relevant service page. This builds internal link equity and creates a path to booking.
6. **Keep it current:** AHPRA guidelines change, treatment approaches evolve. An annual review of your top articles keeps them accurate and signals to Google that the content is maintained.

AI search: how to get found in ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Google AI Overviews

AI search tools are now the first stop for a growing proportion of health information queries. Patients asking ChatGPT "what's the best way to treat postnatal pelvic floor issues in Brisbane" may receive a direct practitioner recommendation. Here's how to be in that answer.

Answer Engine Optimisation (AEO) is the emerging discipline of optimising for AI-generated responses rather than traditional search rankings. Unlike traditional SEO, which is about getting to the top of a list, AEO is about being cited as a source or recommended as a practitioner when an AI system answers a question.

How AI tools decide who to recommend

AI tools cite sources that are:

- **Authoritative:** Written by or clearly attributed to a credentialed expert
- **Specific:** Directly answers the question being asked, with detail
- **Consistent:** The same information appears across multiple sources (your site, your GBP, directories, media mentions)
- **Structured:** Uses clear headings, bullet points, and FAQ format that AI can parse cleanly
- **Local:** For location-specific queries, practices with clear location signals rank in AI results the same way they do in traditional local search

AEO action list: what to do now

1. Add a practitioner bio page to your website with credentials, years of experience, and areas of expertise. AI tools cite named experts far more often than anonymous practice descriptions.
2. Add FAQ sections to every service page using question-format headings (H2 or H3). Format: "What is [treatment]?", "How long does [treatment] take?", "Is [treatment] covered by health insurance?"
3. Use schema markup: FAQPage schema on your FAQ articles and MedicalBusiness schema on your homepage signals to search engines (and AI tools that use them) what your practice is and where.
4. Ensure NAP consistency across your GBP, website, and all online directories. AI tools cross-reference sources... inconsistency reduces confidence.
5. Publish original insight: AI tools increasingly cite perspectives they can't find elsewhere. Your unique clinical viewpoint, articulated clearly on your blog, is your differentiation in AI search as much as in traditional search.

The monthly SEO maintenance checklist

SEO is not a one-time project. It's an ongoing maintenance activity. The good news: for a single-location health practice, effective SEO maintenance takes less than two hours a month once the foundations are in place.

TASK	TIME	FREQUENCY
Publish one new Google Business Post (promotion, update, or tip)	15 min	Weekly
Respond to any new Google reviews	10 min	Weekly
Check Google Business Profile for completeness... hours, photos, services	10 min	Monthly
Publish one new blog article	2–3 hrs	Monthly
Check Google Search Console for crawl errors or manual actions	10 min	Monthly
Review your top 5 keyword rankings and note any movement	15 min	Monthly
Add any new services or team members to your website and GBP	30 min	Monthly

TASK	TIME	FREQUENCY
Check NAP consistency across all directory listings	30 min	Quarterly
Audit top 10 website pages for accuracy and freshness	60 min	Quarterly
Review Google Analytics for traffic trends, top pages, and bounce rates	30 min	Quarterly
Search your primary keywords and review who you're competing against	30 min	Quarterly
Test site speed and mobile performance at pagespeed.web.dev	15 min	Quarterly

Setting up Google Search Console (free)

Google Search Console is the most important free SEO tool available. It shows you exactly which search queries are bringing people to your site, which pages are ranking, and any technical problems Google has found. If you haven't set it up, do this first.

1. Go to search.google.com/search-console
2. Add your property (your website URL)
3. Verify ownership via Google Analytics or by adding a meta tag (your developer can do this in minutes)
4. Submit your sitemap under **Indexing** → **Sitemaps**
5. Check back in 2–4 weeks once data has accumulated

THE COMPOUNDING EFFECT

Practices that maintain their SEO consistently for 12 months see compounding returns... each new article, each new review, and each content update strengthens the overall authority of the site. The practices with the most consistent search presence typically started 18–24 months ago and never stopped. The second-best time to start is today.

Ready to hand this to someone?

If you've read this guide and decided you'd rather have someone who does this every day handle it, that's what we're here for. Our free practice audit reviews your current SEO position and tells you exactly what to prioritise.

thinkbigmedia.com.au/contact