

Reducing stress to avoid burnout



One of the major causes of stress and burnout is not feeling in control of your workload.

You're not alone if you have difficulty managing your time. According to the ACOG report, *The Obstetrician-Gynecologist Workforce in the United States*, up to 75 percent of OBGYNs experience some form of professional burnout (losing control, conflicting demands on time, or diminishing sense of worth).

The demands can be even greater on female practitioners, who “are more likely to reduce their clinical work hours or leave their current practice because of issues with balancing work and family responsibilities.” And when providers are short on time, it impacts their ability to engage with patients on the increasingly important topic of preventive care.

Where does the time go?

The primary reason appointments run late at your practice:

- ▶ Unexpectedly long patient visit
- ▶ Scheduling problems - no-shows or late patients
- ▶ Technology/EHR issues
- ▶ Staffing conflicts or absence
- ▶ Emergencies



Get a handle on time, improve your work-life balance and reduce your overall stress

1. Be realistic and willing to say no. When you're not relaxed, composed and focused on your work, you're doing your staff and patients—and yourself—a disservice. **Politely decline extra work**, like sitting on professional committees or working in “just one more patient”.

2. Try adding a little extra buffer time between patients. It may not seem as productive, but you won't feel stressed when one visit takes longer than expected. With a **buffer between appointments**, you can quickly get back on track instead of creating a cascading backlog that can overwhelm you and your staff and result in a waiting room full of disgruntled patients.

3. Leverage short pockets of time. If you wait for a large block of uninterrupted time, it may never happen. Or you may find yourself staying hours late at the office, so when you finally do get home you don't really have time to relax. How about a few **quick stretches, a healthy snack and a nice deep breath** before you return to the next patient? Try scheduling a **15-minute break** in midmorning or midafternoon for deliberate catch-up on email or to return non-essential calls.

4. Plan the visit and make technology your friend. Automate appointment reminders and consider including **pre-screening questions** to remind patients of what topics they may want to discuss. Also, consider

sending personalized wellness tips to patients so they feel confident that you have their best health in mind, in the absence of one-on-one visits. One Louisiana health system used automated appointment reminders to encourage colorectal screenings by simply pressing a button to initiate scheduling. With 578 screenings scheduled in two months, they generated more than **half a million dollars** in additional revenue.

5. Hire specialized help. Is your staff grumbling about the extra workload around electronic health records? According to Kristin Zeligs, MD, Chair of ACOG's Junior Fellow Congress Advisory Council, “The volume of administrative tasks is steadily increasing. It sometimes takes twice as long to document a patient's visit in comparison to the visit itself.” Consider hiring a **medical scribe** to update the records. It may be more cost-efficient than a full-time staff member responsible for multiple duties.

Adopting some or all of these time management ideas can help you take control of your work life — and afford you more time to relax and enjoy your personal life. When you're not stressed at work, you can use your appointment time more efficiently, giving your full attention to your patients, allowing time to focus on wellness and preventive care for UTIs and other women's health concerns.

You're building their trust — and controlling your workload.

Visit **NoMoreUTIs.com** – an online resource for healthcare providers and patients that focuses on self-care and puts UTI prevention first, brought to you by **ellura**[®], a medical-grade supplement committed to urinary tract health education, antibiotic stewardship, and scientific discovery.

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