



# How to Engage Your Home Health Patients with Digital Home Exercise Programs

By MedBridge

# Overview

A lot has changed recently in the home health industry—from a massive increase in demand combined with a spike in staff shortages to changes in payment models that require agencies to do even more with less.

As agencies grapple with these challenges, something else has been shifting across the healthcare industry as a whole: how care is delivered to patients, as organizations increasingly move to digital care as a way to improve patient engagement and quality of care while optimizing costs. For home health agencies, incorporating digital tools such as home exercise programs (HEPs) is a highly effective strategy for achieving these objectives.

**In our new guide, you'll learn:**

- The primary benefits of digital home exercise programs for home health agencies
- Which digital care tools best complement home exercise programs
- What digital home exercise programs look like in action for home health patients

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## The Future of Patient Care: Moving from Paper to Digital

For home health agencies tasked with minimizing costs while improving care quality, digital home exercise programs and related tools like patient education and telehealth offer many benefits. They empower patients to actively participate in their own care, facilitate personalized exercise routines, and enable ongoing monitoring and support from healthcare providers. By doing so, these programs help agencies better manage high-risk patients, reduce ED and acute care visits, improve overall patient satisfaction and outcomes, and optimize costs and reimbursements. Let's take a look at how this works.



**Communicate more frequently with patients**



**Better manage high-risk patients**



**Improve patient satisfaction**



**“The rapid and dramatic shift of patient volume into the fragmented HHA market will likely necessitate the adoption of digital technologies to enable care delivery.”**

– *[“It’s Time for Health Care CEOs to Rethink Their Home Health Strategy”](#) Ernst & Young*



## Communicate more frequently with patients

In a home health setting where physical therapist visits occur several times a week, gaining more visibility into how patients are doing between visits can significantly improve outcomes. Digital care tools such as home exercise programs, telehealth, remote monitoring, and two-way messaging allow patients to ask questions as they come up and allow providers to check in with them on a regular basis.

For example, imagine that an elderly patient has been experiencing falls as he transfers from his walker to his chair and back. His physical therapist sets up a fall prevention strategy and assigns targeted exercises to help the patient improve functional mobility. The patient finds it easier to complete his exercises online than when using a paper handout, as he can follow along with the demonstrations and receive prompts reminding him to complete his exercises each day. His therapist is able to view his progress, answer questions, and provide feedback. The patient stops falling and avoids any injuries that would have required an ED visit.

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### Relevant Digital Care Tools

- ✓ Home exercise programs
- ✓ Telehealth
- ✓ Patient mobile app with in-app messaging capabilities
- ✓ Remote monitoring

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### Key Benefits

- + Improved patient outcomes
- + Better patient adherence
- + Higher patient satisfaction
- + Lower ED utilization and hospitalization rates



## Better manage high-risk patients

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), outcomes for patients with chronic conditions are significantly better when patients (and their families) take an active role in their care.<sup>1</sup> Yet many high-risk patients, such as those with chronic diseases like COPD, heart failure, and diabetes, don't have the skills or knowledge they need to effectively manage their condition.

Online patient education can help patients manage their disease and even slow its progression by providing engaging, easy-to-understand information on topics such as:

- The name of the diagnosed condition, along with symptoms, anticipated tests and treatments, prognosis, and complications
- Required medications, schedules, and treatment timeframes
- Dietary restrictions, allowances, and recommended menus
- Understanding how to exercise safely
- When a regular doctor appointment is appropriate versus the emergency room
- Energy conservation techniques
- Behaviors that improve health such as stopping smoking, reducing alcohol, and managing weight

Physical therapists can follow up using tools like telehealth and two-way messaging to answer questions from patients and ensure that they are managing their conditions as well as possible, helping to minimize disease progression along with potential ED and acute care visits.

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### Relevant Digital Care Tools

- ✓ Online patient education
- ✓ Online home exercise program
- ✓ Telehealth
- ✓ Patient mobile app with in-app messaging capabilities
- ✓ Remote monitoring

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### Key Benefits

- + Improved patient outcomes
- + Better patient engagement and adherence
- + Higher patient satisfaction
- + Lower ED utilization and hospitalization rates
- + The potential to reduce the number of in-person visits per episode of care



## Improve patient satisfaction

Digital care solutions enhance patient satisfaction in home health by providing convenient access to care, improving communication and engagement, delivering personalized care and education, enabling remote monitoring and timely intervention, promoting patient empowerment and independence, and ultimately leading to improved care outcomes.

When patients can more easily communicate with providers, this accessibility promotes a sense of connectedness and responsiveness, allowing patients to express their concerns, ask questions, and actively participate in their care. Patients who feel heard and engaged in their healthcare journey are more likely to report higher satisfaction levels.

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### Relevant Digital Care Tools

- ✓ Online home exercise program
- ✓ Telehealth
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- ✓ Online patient education
- ✓ Remote monitoring

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### Key Benefits

- + Better patient adherence
- + Improved patient outcomes
- + Higher star ratings
- + Elevated clinician satisfaction

# Deliver a Higher Level of Care

## Communicate more frequently with patients

Check in with patients more often and allow them to ask questions as they come up.

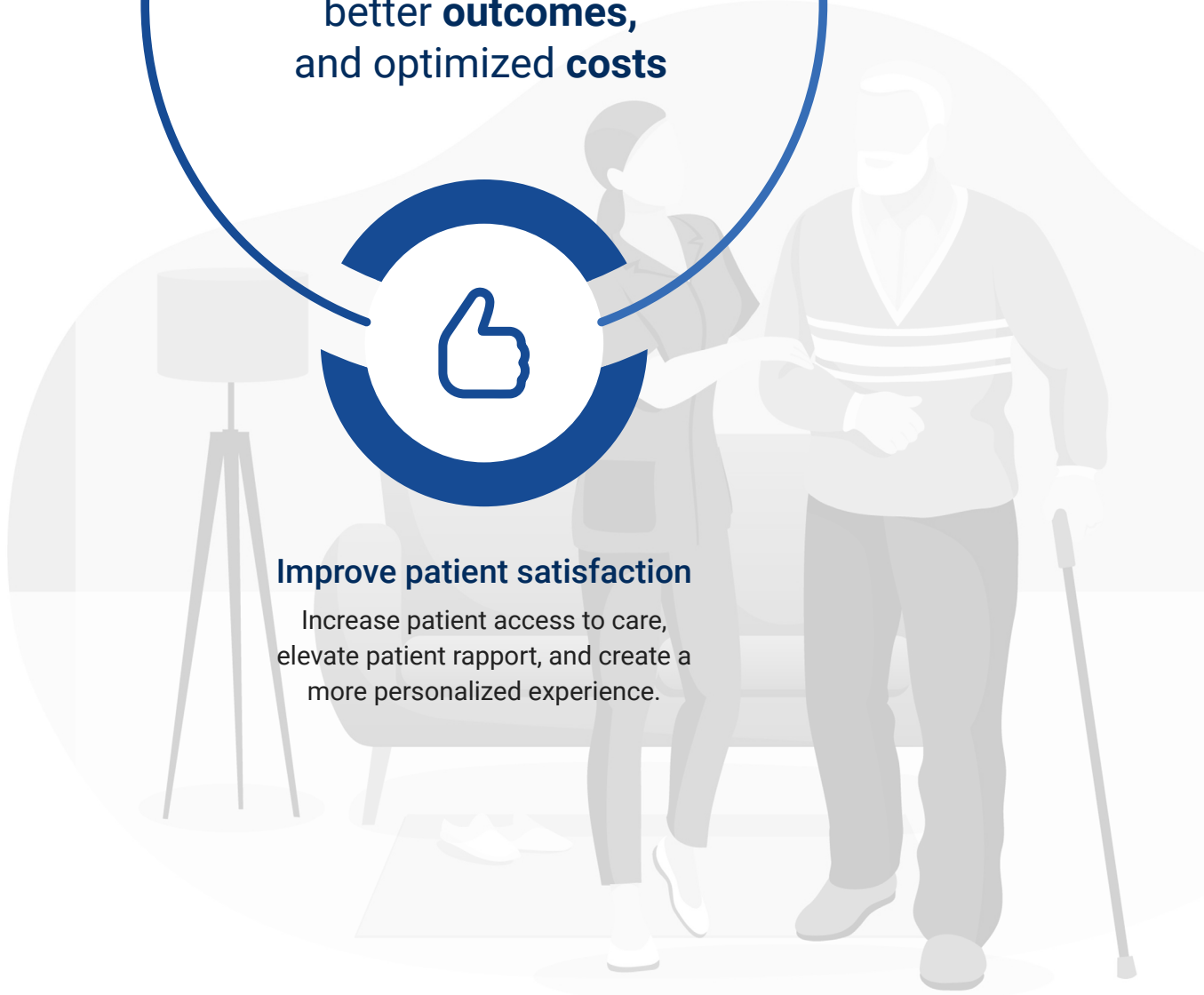
## Better manage high-risk patients

Help patients with chronic conditions manage their condition and even slow its progression.



## Improve patient satisfaction

Increase patient access to care, elevate patient rapport, and create a more personalized experience.





## A Closer Look at Digital Care Tools

Digital care tools work together to help home health agencies provide efficient and high-quality care. Some of the most common digital care tools include:

### Online home exercise programs

HEP is a key component of high-quality therapy, providing important care continuity for patients while reducing the cost and time commitment of supervised therapy sessions for providers. Programs can be tailored to the specific needs and abilities of home health patients, and delivered through online videos, mobile apps, or virtual sessions with therapists. Research shows that when patients adhere to their plan of care and participate in their home exercise program they have better outcomes, reduced pain, and increased physical function.<sup>3</sup>

### Mobile apps

Mobile apps are becoming increasingly popular with patients of all ages as a convenient way to access their care plans, view their progress, and communicate with their providers between visits. Key benefits include improved patient engagement and medication compliance through gamification, reminders, push notifications, and two-way messaging; a stronger therapeutic alliance due to improved communication; and the ability for providers to gather powerful patient activity insights.



# 82%

of patients indicated mobile apps had a positive impact on their ability to engage in exercise activity.<sup>2</sup>

### Smartphone ownership has risen dramatically in older adults

96 percent of adults aged 50 to 65 and 75 percent of adults older than 65 now own smartphones.<sup>4</sup>



## Telehealth

Telehealth and virtual visits offer many benefits for home health agencies, allowing providers to check in with patients between home visits and even reduce the frequency of home visits in some cases. Incorporating telehealth into patient care programs helps providers stay better connected with patients, improving rapport, patient satisfaction, quality of care, patient engagement, and outcomes.

## Online patient education

Targeted online educational resources can empower patients to actively participate in their care. These resources might include instructional videos, educational materials, and interactive tools that teach patients about their conditions, self-care techniques, and strategies for preventing disease progression and maintaining physical function. By gaining knowledge and adopting self-management practices, patients can take proactive steps to optimize their physical well-being.

## Patient adherence tracking tools

Adherence tracking tools allow clinicians to monitor how well patients are following their care program and taking their medications while also allowing patients to report symptoms or side effects. Effective medication management and symptom control can minimize the impact of underlying conditions on physical function and overall well-being.



**“Telehealth is here to stay. It’s not whether telehealth will be offered, but how best to offer telehealth services as we move toward what we’re terming digitally enabled care—which is not just hybrid care, but more so fully integrated in-person and virtual care based on clinical appropriateness.”**

*— Meg Barron, Vice President of Digital Health Innovations, American Medical Association*

**In January 2022, 38% of patients in the U.S. received care via telehealth, and by 2025 more than 43% of the U.S. population is expected to regularly use telehealth.<sup>5,6</sup>**

**94% of patients said they would access patient education materials from their clinicians if they were available.<sup>7</sup>**

# A Patient's Journey with Digital Care

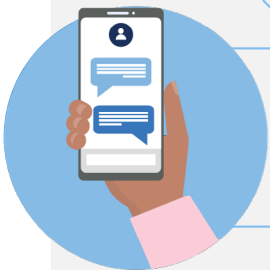
Older adults are increasingly using telehealth, smartphone apps, and other digital health technologies to reduce barriers to care, maintain patient-provider communication, and promote disease self-management, according to a 2022 study.<sup>8</sup> Let's take a look at what the care journey might look like for a patient enrolled in a home health program that incorporates digital home exercises.

Patients enrolled in a digital engagement platform after hip and knee surgeries demonstrated a 45.4% reduction in 90-day hospital readmissions and a 54.4% reduction in 90-day complications, significantly reducing costs.<sup>9</sup>



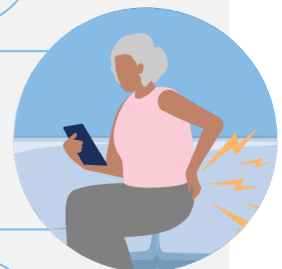
Anita, 78, receives hip replacement surgery and is discharged to home health.

During the first home visit, the home health physical therapist helps Anita download a patient mobile app on her phone and shows her how to use it.



The app connects Anita to targeted patient education about her condition, exercises that will help her regain mobility, and two-way messaging.

When Anita becomes concerned about her surgical wound, she is able to easily message her therapist instead of going to the ER.



The therapist sets up a telehealth session to evaluate Anita's wound, follows up with a home visit, and determines that Anita doesn't need to visit the hospital.



Anita continues with her care program as prescribed, performing the exercises demonstrated in her HEP program. **She recovers well without any setbacks or visits to the hospital.**





## Engage Your Patients with MedBridge

MedBridge offers best-in-class digital care solutions that integrate patient engagement and education with innovative technology. We offer:

### [Home Exercise Program Builder](#) ▶

Engage patients with an easily accessible and customizable library with thousands of video exercises developed by industry professionals.

### [Patient Education](#) ▶

Help patients understand their diagnosis and rehabilitation plan with engaging education to encourage them to effectively manage their care plan.

### [Telehealth Virtual Visits](#) ▶

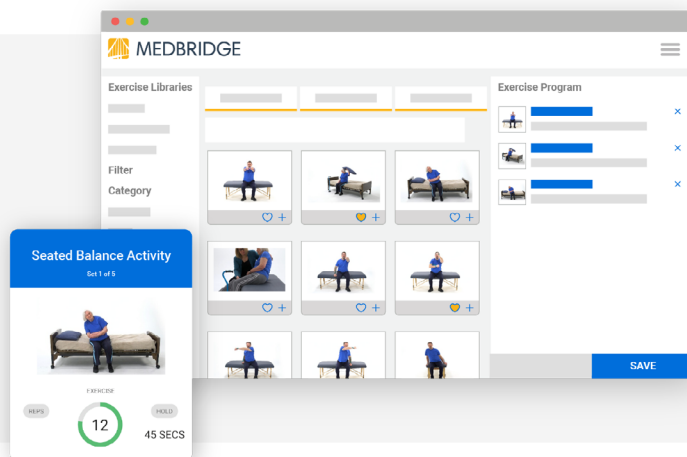
Supplement or replace in-person visits with effective, user-friendly telehealth tools.

### [MedBridge GO Mobile App and MedBridge Patient Portal](#) ▶

Make access to care easy and convenient by giving patients the choice of participating in their care program via app or online.

### [Patient Adherence Tracking](#)

Support behavior change with improved communication and deeper understanding of your patients' actions.



# References

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## ABOUT MEDBRIDGE

Combining powerful digital patient care tools with the highest quality education, MedBridge is committed to making healthcare better for both providers and patients. Organizations across the care continuum use MedBridge to provide an enriched, digitally enabled experience that engages patients while streamlining and simplifying care. Designed with over a decade of insight from more than 300,000 clinicians and 25 million patients, MedBridge has helped thousands of organizations realize better patient outcomes. [Learn more.](#)

See how MedBridge can help your organization.

[Contact us to request a demo.](#)