

Engage and Empower: Pharma's Social Opportunity



Are you showing up for social audiences?

Health consumers today are more likely than ever to turn to digital channels for information and community. They want to hear from and engage with the brands they trust — including pharma brands.

73%

of people living with a chronic condition are interested in engaging with pharma brands on social media.

Yet only 23% of people living with chronic conditions currently follow pharma brands. It's time to bridge the gap and offer people the resources and engagement they seek.

To understand how pharma brands and marketers can make the most of consumer enthusiasm, Healthline Media and DHC Group collaborated on new research identifying key consumer attitudes and behaviors around digital health.

Read on to learn how marketers can best build brand recognition, foster trust, and engage with their audiences to encourage real-world action.

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“In our latest research on pharma industry trends, over 65% of marketers indicated they want to see significant innovation in consumer/patient social media. **Patient insights are key** to unlocking that innovation.”

Christine Franklin
Executive Director, DHC Group

How Today's Health Audiences Follow and Engage Online

The pandemic changed how frequently consumers use social media for their health. Today, people living with chronic conditions don't just visit doctors for treatment advice — they often go online and to social platforms for both information and connection.

Reach your consumers WHERE they engage



61%



59%



39%



29%

Understand WHO they engage with on social

62%

health & wellness
information sites

53%

physician or doctor
influencers

44%

health or condition
communities

25%

pharmaceutical
companies

Recognize WHY they engage

To get **practical
advice** on managing

To develop
personal connections

To learn from others'
firsthand experiences

BUILDING POINTS:

Showing up in the right way online matters. More people than ever are turning to health and wellness sites, doctor influencers, and condition communities on social for support and information along their health journey.

Despite the rise of new social channels like TikTok, Facebook and Instagram are consistent mainstays and good starting points for pharma brands.



Why Pharma Needs to Tap into the Power of Trust

More than ever, people living with chronic conditions want to take action using information they can trust. They prefer credentials, research citations, and other markers of credibility over generalized information or celebrity endorsements. The good news? Three in five people that follow pharma on social show high levels of trust in pharma.

People want credibility, expertise, and specificity on social media

76% are more likely to **trust physician influencers** vs. general health & wellness influencers

63% are more likely to **trust health & wellness information sites** vs. general news sites

39% say they **distrust** sponsored health & wellness content from **celebrities, athletes, or influencers**

Influencers are still popular, but reasons for trusting them may differ

Doctor influencers are popular for their medical expertise and are often recommended by a medical professional.

Condition influencers are seen as relatable, inspiring, and part of a close-knit community.

Consumers often choose to follow them when they partner with trusted brands.

BUILDING POINTS:

Build on what you're doing right with your social followers. Continue to cultivate trust and prioritize high-quality health information.

Broaden the scope of your partnerships. Collaborate with credible influencers, in addition to other macro and celebrity influencers, who can help you craft compelling stories and promote condition education.

“Influencers living with a chronic condition have the ability to shape content and storytelling that is **meaningful and actionable** because they know and **understand what their audience is going through**. This makes for highly personal and impactful content.”

Angela Puracuro
Director, Social Media Strategy, Healthline Media



What Social Audiences Want to See from Your Brand

Audiences actively seek out information that empowers them to take action toward improving their well-being.

- **66%** turn to **health and wellness sites** such as Healthline.com to learn about treatment options
- **70%** turn to **condition influencers** for tips on managing a condition
- **49%** turn to **pharma brands** to learn about topics to discuss with a doctor

It's time to take social media beyond advertising and static posts.

Chronic condition audiences want in-depth content about prescription medications, patient perspectives and insights, promotional offers, and more.

93% of those who follow pharma brands on social want to engage so they can:

- Learn about new medications (**56%**)
- View testimonials from patients or customers (**46%**)
- Get access to manufacturer coupons or discount (**48%**)
- Get access to patient education or content offered by pharma (**53%**)

How would they like to engage?

- **39%** directly message the brand
- **36%** would like pharma to have a presence in health or condition communities
- **34%** comment on brand posts

“There is an opportunity for pharma organizations across brands to **embrace the desire for engagement and connectivity**. While some brands may say, ‘Less than half want us on social media,’ — What if you learned the other half represents **your best customers?**”

Mark Bard
Co-Founder, DHC Group

BUILDING POINTS:

Pharma brand followers are a ripe opportunity for engagement! Beyond information, they are interested in truly engaging and interacting on social.

Don't miss out on this enthusiasm — think about how you can engage with this audience and provide the services they actually want to see.



Pharma's Next Step: Focus on Community to Drive Action

With an effective social strategy, pharma brands have an opportunity to drive significant offline behavior — especially when you show up in chronic condition communities.

After engaging with health and wellness content on social, people living with chronic conditions become...

- **Information Seekers**, who conduct further research online (64%) and on social media (32%).
- **Small Steppers**, who try something new or different in their daily routines (47%), and track symptoms (43%) and medication side effects (32%) more closely.
- **Proactive Action-takers**, who speak to their doctor about switching medications (36%), check with insurance to see if treatment is covered (24%), or request a specific brand of medication from their doctor (21%).

Community encourages action

When we look at people living with chronic conditions who use social media for health and wellness information, we see that those who are also part of condition communities are more likely to act on treatment information, such as speaking to a doctor about switching medications.



AREN'T SURE WHERE TO GO NEXT?

Start within a health community. These condition communities are highly engaged, are more likely to take immediate action, and are actively seeking ways to improve their health.

“When pharma brands sponsor condition communities, they are able to **drive awareness of their brand amongst a highly qualified audience** who may be seeking a new treatment, support for adhering to their current treatment, or other resources that pharma sites may provide.”

Jennifer Draeger
Vice President Marketing, Healthline Media



Additional Steps for Leveraging Social Media's Potential

With the right approach, pharma brands can leverage social media to build a loyal following of health-conscious individuals who are eager to engage with their content and share it within their networks.

Find opportunities using modular content and moderated engagement to take the next step with patients seeking more than just broad-brush posts from social media managers.

Go beyond “link in bio.” Look to integrate coupons and co-pay programs into social platforms more cohesively.

Assess whether your current messaging and customer service align with the direction your brand wants to take. It's likely your audience is already there and waiting for you!

Partner with Healthline Media to Maximize Engagement

Healthline Media can help pharma brands take action and deliver the right messages to audiences wherever they are in their health and wellness journey. We have insights into what channels audiences are engaging with and data that tells us what they're looking for.

Through platforms like Bezzy, we're helping to create safe spaces where audiences can find credible health information and build meaningful connections to care. In these spaces, pharma brands can engage with highly motivated consumers, driving new prescriptions and increased search for real brand impact.

For more audience insights from Healthline Media, or to learn how to partner with us, [get in touch!](#)



Sources:

Healthline Media Social Health Trends survey. Survey of 1,013 U.S. adults who use social media for health and wellness information (693 of who manage a health condition). Data weighted to be nationally representative based on age. Mar 2023.

About Healthline Media

Healthline Media is the #1 digital health and wellness property, connecting 85 million people each month with expert content, communities, and partners that impact their road to well-being and create a stronger, healthier world. Learn more at [HealthlineMedia.com](https://www.healthline.com).