

AetnaPX

Positive first impressions guide



Why first impressions matter

The first 30 seconds of a patient interaction set the tone for trust, safety and connection. Whether in person, over the phone or at the bedside, your presence shapes their entire experience of care.

A positive first impression can:

Build immediate trust

Improve compliance

Boost CAHPS scores and STAR ratings

Encourage survey participation and loyalty

Words and actions that build trust

The 5/10 Rule:

- At 10 feet: Smile and make eye contact
- At 5 feet: Offer a warm greeting

Say:

- “Good morning, Ms. Ramirez. I’m Alex, your nurse today.”
- “What matters most to you today?”
- “Here’s what we’ll be doing and why.”
- “You may receive a survey after your visit — your feedback helps us improve.”

Start strong:

- Use the patient’s name
- Introduce yourself and your role clearly
- Sit down whenever possible (commit to sit)
- Give them space during the introduction

Do:

- Knock before entering
- Use warm facial expressions and open posture
- Speak calmly, clearly and respectfully
- Review the chart beforehand

Best practice standards:

1. Use the patient’s name

Shows respect and makes the interaction personal.

2. Recall personal details

“How did your daughter’s graduation go?” Shows you care beyond the chart.

3. Commit to sit

Sitting = presence. Patients perceive you as spending more time, even when it’s brief.

4. Narrate care

Say what you’re doing and why. It reduces fear and increases understanding.

5. Manage up

Reinforce the excellence of the team: “You’re in great hands with Dr. Patel.”

6. Knock before entering

Basic, respectful and sets a boundary.

7. Follow-up

A short message or call after the first visit makes a lasting impression.

Show up with intention. Start strong. Set the tone. The path forward begins with presence.