

NHS England ramps up YouTube content to deliver health information that matters

NHS England, the country’s publicly funded healthcare system, is committed to providing high-quality information and services for all. The NHS team believed that YouTube would provide an opportunity to engage a diverse audience outside of visitors to its website (www.nhs.uk), and provide high-quality, accessible information to people searching for common health topics.

They conducted detailed user research to inform their content strategy, they collaborated with Shorts creators to engage a younger audience, and they measured engagement and impact to ensure content was meeting the needs and expectations of viewers.

As a result, the NHS has uploaded **300+ videos and gained 50M+ views over the past few years, with over 5M views in 2023 alone. That’s a 20% increase in views since 2022.** Here’s a look at how they got there.

 **50M**

views since the start of the pandemic

 **300+**

videos uploaded since the start of the pandemic

 **20%**

5M views in 2023, which is a 20% increase on previous year

Meet audiences where they need it most

Understanding viewers’ wants and needs is critical to creating engaging content. So, the NHS team undertook User Experience Research (UXR) to help inform everything from the content production process, to visual cues, to topics that mattered most for their audience.

An assigned, dedicated researcher focused on gaining a deeper understanding of audience needs via surveys, analysis, and content testing. First, the team interviewed a diverse range of people who regularly watched health-related content on YouTube, which provided valuable insights into viewing behaviors.

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For instance, people seeking specific medical advice favored shorter, straightforward videos, while people in exploration mode were interested in longer, in-depth videos.

Content Spotlight

NHS England helps people better understand common health concerns with Minor Illnesses playlist

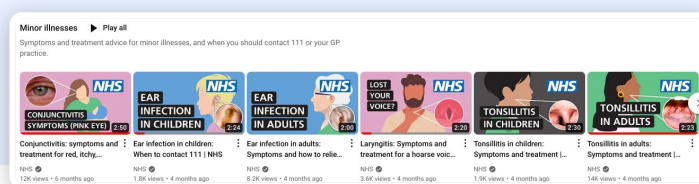
The NHS needed to create content that mattered most to those searching for answers to common health questions. They identified the minor illnesses driving the highest volume of queries to its 111 telephone and online services, and created video content to guide people around those topics, including signposting to the most appropriate care. The [Minor Illnesses content playlist](#) helps people to navigate common symptoms and also ensure that they understand how to access any care they might need, at the right time.

Next, they interviewed 18-35 year old YouTube viewers to better understand what younger audiences care about when searching for health information. Check out the findings that helped shape their content strategy:

- **Viewers are more likely to trust content that uses authoritative visual cues** like showing the NHS logo, filming in a clinical space, or having a “verified” check-mark.
- **Animated content resonates with audiences**, which enables the NHS team to quickly update motion graphics if clinical advice changes over time. It also reduces the need to scout for locations and talent and allows animated components to be updated quickly and easily.
- **Designing visually consistent thumbnails** increases click-through rates.
- **Titling videos based on common search terms** that clearly state the video topic increases audience retention.
- **Using authoritative hosts or voice-overs** helps personalize the viewing experience and build trust, making people feel cared for, as if in an examination room.

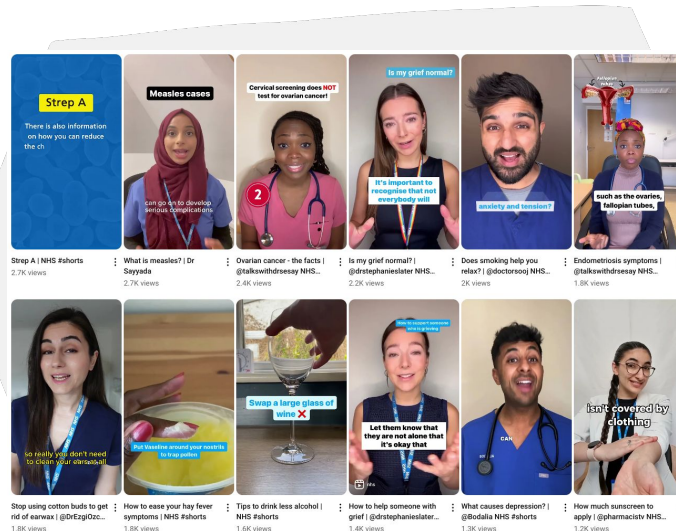
The playlist follows a consistent bold visual design, searchable titles, and a memorable thumbnail format to help viewers easily find their videos. Resources like their Find a Pharmacy service and their 111 phone line and website are also linked in health content cards featured under videos, so people can access more care as needed. This strategy has boosted their discoverability, pushing content to the top of YouTube health shelves.

The series has been a hit: **Almost 80% of views come from YouTube searches, and health content cards have a 30% click-through rate.** Looking forward, the NHS team intends to expand on minor illness to cover more seasonal topics.



Collaborate with other creators to expand reach

To meet diverse and younger audiences on YouTube, specifically 18-35 year olds with different backgrounds, the NHS team knew they needed to experiment with Shorts. However, this format was new territory and the team didn't have the capacity to create more content at scale.



That's why they decided to collaborate with a range of clinician creators in the UK who could provide Shorts expertise and help the NHS lean into short-form videos. This enabled them to build trust with new, younger audiences and uncover what strategies worked on Shorts.

Through experimentation, the NHS could take a more informal approach to content creation, enabling them to share information succinctly and relatively quickly. As a result, they could expand their catalog and publish more content than ever before.

With 70% of their Shorts viewers being between the ages of 18 and 35, NHS England is able to help younger audiences find answers to their medical questions and make informed healthcare decisions.

Measure impact along the way

The NHS knows that to achieve their YouTube content goals they need to measure how effective their videos are. Analyzing metrics like traffic sources, viewer demographic, and viewer retention helps the NHS fine-tune their content strategy to ensure people are finding and watching their videos.

Additionally, the Community tab has been an essential tool to help the NHS engage with their subscribers and gauge what people want to see on their channel. For example, surveys and polls enable their community to share input and shape the content. With 100-200 poll participants, the NHS has been able to create videos based on what topics subscribers want to learn about.

How can you expand your reach on YouTube?

The NHS YouTube channel has grown immensely since they changed up their content strategy. Not only have they been able to deliver more impactful health information to younger viewers on Shorts, but they've also connected more people searching common health topics with authoritative resources. Here are three things you can do today to help grow your channel:

- 1 Get to know your audience better**
Not everyone can invest resources into UXR like England's public healthcare service, but there are tons of other ways to learn about your audience, so you can meet their needs. Dig into your channel analytics to better understand who your viewers are and where they're coming from. Discover what content they engage with most and create videos that will resonate with them.
- 2 Try creating in new formats:**
There are billions of viewers watching Shorts. Expand your output and reach by sharing short succinct content that engages younger audiences. Still not sure what will resonate? Try collaborating with other creators to help you get started.
- 3 Ask your viewers for feedback**
Don't be afraid to ask your subscribers what they want to see next by posting polls in your Community tab.

