

10 BEST PRACTICES FOR REDUCING CANCELLATIONS

If you're ready to get serious about reducing cancellations at your practice, there are several principles and methods that you can use. Following these best practice tips will help you keep those patients on schedule and help you cut out the gaps in your schedule left by cancellations:

1

VALUE WHAT YOU DO:

When you undervalue what you do, you undervalue who you are. You are doing more than just putting in crowns and fixing teeth—what you do as a dentist is incredibly valuable, and you have to remember this if you want your patients to value the time they spend at your practice. This includes respecting patient appointment times and being on time as an office.

2

CREATE VALUE FOR YOUR PATIENTS:

When you're discussing services and treatments with your patients, focus on building value for them. Make sure they know that the appointment is about more than just routine dental treatment—it's about giving the patient a beautiful smile, building their confidence and helping them enjoy a better quality of life.

3

ALL CANCELLATIONS START AT THE CHAIR:

Each dental team member shares the responsibility of reducing cancellations. Don't just pass off cancellations to the front desk—make sure that you are doing what you can to keep your patients coming in when they're supposed to. Dentists and hygienists should be the first ones to remind patients of the importance of keeping their appointments before they even schedule their next visit.

4

KNOW YOUR CANCELLATIONS AND NO SHOW APPOINTMENT PERCENTAGE

You have to know how many people are making appointments and how many people are keeping them if you want to reduce cancellations. Once you have determined your cancellations percentage, start to focus on getting that number down. Make it your ultimate goal to reduce that cancellations percentage down to one or two percent. No-show appointments are different from appointment cancellations. If patients are making appointments and then not showing up without giving you any notice. You need to be tracking and entering those appointments into your records accordingly.

5

CONSIDER ALL APPOINTMENTS CONFIRMED WHEN SCHEDULED:

Instead of following up with your patients to confirm the appointment, you should make it clear that all appointments are already confirmed. "Inform the patient "We are reserving this time especially for you and the doctor" Continue to send out text, and email reminders. Verbally confirm unconfirmed appointments 2 days advance. Consider using this verbiage. "We do require a form of confirmation" when confirming appointments.

6

SCHEDULE OUT HYGIENE APPOINTMENTS FOR SIX MONTHS PLUS TWO WEEKS:

There are several reasons why you should schedule out your hygiene appointments this way, but one of the primary ones is because it ensures that you're within the appropriate window of what dental insurance policies will cover. Lots of dentists know the frustration of getting a letter from an insurance company denying coverage of a routine appointment because it was scheduled a couple days short of six months from the previous appointment. Scheduling with a little more leeway allows you to avoid this hassle. Start with "Let's set up your next visit!" Instead of using the verbiage "Would you like to."

7

STOP USING THE WORD "CANCELLATION":

Instead of using the word "cancellation," use the phrase "change in schedule." This shift can help your patients view schedule changes more positively and will make it easier for you to get appointments rescheduled if you need to.

8

START CODING PATIENTS' BEHAVIORS:

Create three appointment codes: cancellation, no-show and late. Every time a patient cancels, doesn't show up or is late for an appointment, log them so that you can start gathering and analyzing data at your practice. It helps to analyze the referral source. Your cancellations could be coming from a less effective marketing offer.

9

COMMUNICATE AND CALIBRATE WITH YOUR TEAM:

During your morning huddle, be aware of openings today, tomorrow, and next week. Be sure to have every patient confirm their current phone number, address, and email address upon arrival.

10

HAVE A CANCELLATION FEE, BUT NEVER USE IT:

A cancellation fee is an effective way to reduce cancellations, even if you never end up actually using it. Inform patients that there is a cancellation fee of \$75 or \$100. If a patient cancels, tell them about the cancellation fee and offer to waive it. This will encourage them to keep their appointment next time and gives you the opportunity to build more rapport with them by doing them a favor.

▶ YOU MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO ELIMINATE CANCELLATIONS OVERNIGHT, BUT YOU CAN USE THESE SIMPLE TIPS TO HELP YOU GET MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION FOR YOUR PRACTICE.