

Emergency Calls

TOOTHACHE

Tender to
HOT, PRESSURE, TAPPING
or has
SWOLLEN FACE or **PIMPLE ON GUM**

URGENT

Likely infection and requires either antibiotics or 'open & drain'

Tender to
COLD

LESS URGENT

Likely requires a filling

BROKEN/LOST FILLING

If **tender/painful** - **URGENT**

If affecting appearance and patient concerned - **URGENT**

None of the above? **LESS URGENT**

Ask the patient how long tooth has been broken/lost filling

TLC FOLLOW-UP CALLS

"Hi (patient). It's (receptionist) from (practice) (Practitioner) wanted me to give you a call and see how you are going after yesterday's (extraction/large filling/emergency treatment).

How is the area on your (upper right) feeling?"



GOOD

"Great to hear!
If you develop any concerns,
let me know.
Otherwise have a lovely day."



HAS CONCERN

"I will mention that to
(practitioner) and let you know
if there are any instructions to
aid in your healing."

Scheduling a Recall

Version 1

"Hello (patient), this is (receptionist) from (practice). Have I called at a good time?"

"I am calling to schedule your six-monthly assessment."

(Schedule appt if patient happy to do so.)

"You may remember that at your last visit, (practitioner) discussed with you (Reason to Return-an oral condition that the dentist had noted should be reviewed in 6-months. For example, a cracked tooth, gum inflammation, recent large work etc). When would you like to get this reviewed?"

"If you like, I can reserve a time for you in a month and then confirm it closer to the date. Shall we do that?"

Scheduling a Recall

Version 2

"Hello (patient), it is (name) from your dental practice/(practice name).
How are you?"

"I am calling to let you know that it has been six months since your last visit and you are due for your regular dental check-up. How are things feeling, dentally?"

If the patient states there have been any concerns..."It is a good idea to get that looked at. Let's organise an appointment for you."

If the patient states everything has been fine..."I noticed on your file that Dr (name) wanted to see you to assess (state condition noted by dentist as 'compelling reason to return'-if not stated, the reason can be stated as "advised seeing you after six months to make sure everything is still healthy and to get your teeth cleaned"). Would you like to organise an appointment?"

If the patient wants to organise an appointment, move forward with the usual process.

Scheduling a Recall

Version 2 cont...

If they decline booking for whatever reason, ask them “I can adjust when we contact you again to schedule this appointment on your file – when is a good time for you? A couple of weeks away? Or a couple of months?..”

If the patient states they do not want to be contacted, then leave them in the system for the usual 6-monthly. Remember, that we won't be able to force a patient into changing their recall behaviour with a phone call. We have done our job well if we have made the telephone call a positive and engaging communication that builds likability and trust.

If the patient expresses any questions about the need for recalls, I suggest getting their email address and letting them know that you will forward them some information that will detail how recalls are an important way to maintain effective oral health.

Note

- Be bright, friendly and confident.
- Build rapport and conversation into the discussion where possible.
- Shift the intention from ‘get this patient in the book’ to ‘help this patient maintain good oral care management’. Your intention does come through in your management of the call. We want the patient to ‘feel’ that you are concerned for their health, rather than making them schedule an appointment.

Welcoming your patients

Upon entry to the practice...

First 4 Seconds

1. Eye contact (instant)
2. Smile!
3. Body language
4. Great opening line

"Welcome! How can I help you?"

Upon telephoning the practice...

First 4 Seconds

1. Answer phone swiftly
2. Smile!
3. Body language
4. Great opening line

"Dental surgery, Julie speaking, how may I help you?" (Say with a bit of pizzazz!)

For callers with an emergency, build rapport through empathy:

"Oh gosh, I'm sorry to hear you are having trouble. Tell me more about that."

"We can certainly help you out. Do I have your records here or will this be your first visit with us?"

For regular recall callers:

"I can help you with that! How have the past months been for you?"

Late Cancellation

Always be friendly and respectful. We can still get the message across without being abrasive.

When a patient cancels/moves an appointment, go to their details and review the Reason To Return.

“Oh, you have to cancel. Let me just get your details up in front of me.”
“Your appointment is for (an hour). Is there any chance you could keep your time?”

Or

“(Dentist) has a note here that he was quite concerned about an (infection in your gum) (the decay deepening closer to the nerve). He wanted to see you sooner rather than later. Is there a chance you can keep that time?”

If the patient maintains they need to move their appointment...

“I understand you are in a bind. Just to let you know that we do normally require 24 hours’ notice when moving an appointment, otherwise, a fee is charged. I won’t worry about the fee this time. Let’s find another time in the schedule for you.”

Dentist is Running Late

1. "You have been waiting for 10 minutes. Let me check how much longer they'll be."
2. Sit down beside the patient. "They will actually be (45 minutes). How is that going to work for you?"
3. Allow them to express any upset they may feel. Just listen until they finish speaking.
4. "I completely understand. I would be upset too."
5. Provide options for solution. "Would you like to wait and get your treatment done today, or would you like to reschedule?"
6. With eye contact and possible touch to the patient's arm, sincerely say, "I do apologise."

Appointment Confirmation

"Hi (patient). It is (receptionist) from (practice). I am confirming that the time of your appointment tomorrow is (time). You will be here for (appt length).

(Patient responds they will be there)

"I look forward to seeing you then."

(If the patient needs to move their appointment)

"We do normally ask for 24 hours' notice for appointment changes. Is there any way you can keep your time tomorrow?"

(Patient still wants to move the appointment but they are a good patient and they very rarely move appointments)

"I understand. I will pass that on to (practitioner name). Let's find you another time."

(Patient still wants to move the appointment and you want to provide a warning of possible future broken appointment fee)

"I understand. I will pass that on to (practitioner name). Let's find you another appointment but if the appointment needs to be changed within 24 hours again, I may have to charge you our \$100 late cancellation fee."

Incomplete Treatment Follow Up

"Hi (patient). It is (receptionist) from (practice). How are you?"

(Practitioner) asked me to give you a call regarding the (incomplete treatment) that you need on your (tooth position in the mouth, for example, 'lower right molar tooth'). Do you remember (practitioner) speaking to you about this?"

(Patient states 'yes')

Would you like to arrange a time for this now?"

(Patient states 'yes')

"Great. What day and times suit you best?"

(Patient states 'no, but I will call back to book in')

"Okay. I can send you a booking link so, once you are ready, you can simply click on it and find your best time. Is it better to SMS this link or email it through to you?"

(Patient says they do not wish to book in and they will leave it for now)

"No worries. (Practitioner) was mentioning that he/she was concerned about that area so I'll send you what he noted to me. That way you can plan for it in the future, if you wish. Is it better to send an email or letter?"

Telephone Answering Guide

"(Practice Name), (Receptionist) speaking, how may I help you?"

(High energy and friendliness)

Pt wants to make an appt.

"Are you a regular patient here or is it your first time with us?"

"I am a new patient."

**"Well, first of all...welcome!
It's delightful to speak with you."**

"I am a patient there."

"What is your name and I will access your file?"

"Oh, Sally, I have your file here. How are you?"

"Do you need an appt for a general check-up or are you experiencing a particular problem?"

**"I can certainly help you with that!"
Let's find an appointment for you.
Were you hoping for a particular time or day?"**

IF SOON APPT IS AVAILABLE
(Sounding surprised)

"Oh! We actually have an opening tomorrow at 3:00 pm...does that happen to suit you?"

IF FURTHER IN THE FUTURE
(Ideal to offer two times to choose from.)

"The next available day is Tuesday the 4th of January. The times are 10am or 4pm. Would either of those suit?"

PROVIDE SUMMARY

**"Okay, confirming that that appt is for (day and time) and you will be here for (length of appt).
(If necessary, include the quotation.)"**

"Is there anything else I can help you with, (name)?"

"I look forward to seeing you then!"