

LATE ARRIVALS POLICY

Introduction

This policy sets out the procedure to follow where a patient:

- Is late for their appointment, but is less than 10 minutes late
- Is more than 10 minutes late, and less than 20 minutes late
- Is more than 20 minutes late

Or:

- Telephones at short notice to advise that they will be late, in which case the above provisions will apply.

General Policy

Patients have a duty to attend pre-booked appointments promptly, and to take into account logistical difficulties or the time involved in travelling to the surgery. The practice will, as far as practicable, see patients who arrive late, however this may be at the end of surgery and will therefore involve a considerable wait for those who do not wish to re-book.

It is generally inappropriate to delay patients who have arrived on time to accommodate earlier patients who have arrived late, however where an opportunity develops (for example where an earlier patient has been seen quickly and the GP becomes “ahead of time”) it may be possible to see a late arrival in the gap.

The practice will monitor and record the incidence of patients who are late for appointments within the clinical system. Persistent late attendees will be issued with a series of warning letters.

The Practice Leaflet / Patient Information procedures will incorporate a section advising patients that should they be late, it may not be possible for them to be seen, or that they may be seen only with a considerable wait.

The following general provisions will apply:

Less than 10 minutes late

The patient will be marked as an arrival in their pre-booked “slot”. The doctor or nurse will call them in at the first available opportunity. The patient should be advised of this and that there may be some delay while they are fitted in. For patients’ safety, the doctor/nurse may advise to re-book an appointment even if the patient arrives less than 10 minutes late for their appointment, if there is not enough time and it is not safe to carry out a specific test or procedure e.g. cervical screening, wound dressing, vaccinations.

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More than 10 minutes, less than 20 minutes late

The patient will be advised that as they are a late arrival the doctor/nurse will have to see punctual patients first, and that they will be added on to the end of the surgery list, and will therefore have a considerable delay (depending on the time). They may be seen during the surgery only if the doctor has an unexpected gap, in which case they will be called in. The patient should be encouraged to re-book. In all cases, the doctor will be sent a message advising them that the patient has reported late, and what the outcome regarding future appointments is.

More than 20 minutes late

The patient has clearly missed the appointment, and should be encouraged to rebook. Where there is an indication of clinical urgency then they may be added to the end of the surgery list. In all cases, the doctor will be sent a message advising them that the patient has reported late, and what the outcome regarding future appointments is.

The practice will not, at this stage, differentiate between patients who are persistent late attendees and others. This will be dealt with, should the need arise, by individual letter.

Clinical System

Patients who arrive late should be coded in all cases as:

9N4P – Late for Appointment

This will enable individual patient review, should this be appropriate.