

How to Handle Patients Who Cancel — 7 Tips to Keep You in Control

It happened again this week. A last-minute cancellation on Tuesday and a patient no-show on Thursday. And there you are, stuck with vacant slots and lost income. Missed appointments are frustrating—and costly. One study found that financial losses from missed healthcare appointments in the United States total **\$150 billion annually**.

In this article, we're going to look at some of the reasons for cancelled appointments and no-shows. More importantly, we'll share some tips and strategies on how to handle patients who cancel in your chiropractic practice.

Common reasons patients fail to show up

Last minute cancellations and patient no-shows happen for a variety of reasons. Chances are, you've seen and heard it all when it comes to why patients fail to show. But for many chiropractors, being no-shows with no explanation can be frustrating.

Fortunately, there are many tried and true methods on how to handle patients who cancel.

7 tips for managing last-minute cancellations and no-shows

1. **Ask for reminder preferences** — It's essential to send out reminders per *each client's preferred method*, i.e., text, phone, or email. Some need all three. As part of the intake, ask patients what works best for them and explain they'll get a series of reminders up until 24 hours

before their appointment. *Be sure you have the correct information for all methods.*

2. **Make rescheduling simple** — Address cancellations and no-shows right away. For no-shows, wait 15 minutes past the appointment time before reaching out to see what happened. Missed or cancelled appointments, as well as efforts to contact the patient, should be documented. The primary or referring provider should also be notified if a patient cancels or misses an appointment that was scheduled as a consultation. In any case, get in touch immediately to reschedule. The sooner you connect with a patient who cancels or doesn't show up, the better.
3. **Offer discounts or incentives** — Some chiropractors have found that offering small discounts or small thank-you gifts like exercise bands, hot packs, etc. can be effective incentives for regular appointment attendance. Typically, keeping appointments three times in a row is worthy of a thank you. Your staff could promote this at the front desk.
4. **Communicate why follow-up care is important** — Sometimes even the most consistent patients can get complacent about appointments now and then. Gently explain that every appointment is important and explain your goals for the next appointment to encourage return compliance.
5. **Allow rescheduling online** — One great tool for ensuring appointment compliance is allowing patients to reschedule or cancel and then create a new appointment online. It's a convenient option for computer-savvy patients who, in other cases, would simply cancel outright or fail to show because something else came up.
6. **Deal with repeat offenders** — One difficult part of handling patients who cancel is addressing those who consistently miss appointments. Needless to say, no-shows impact your bottom line, so talk to these

patients and find out what's happening. You may be able to help them overcome the issue.

7. **Keep a waiting list to fill vacancies** — Ensure your practice maintains a wait list to quickly fill vacancies from cancellations and no-shows. Confirm wait-listed patients' best days and times, and the correct contact information is also noted.

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