



# Check your practice: Panel size

## Best Advice Guide: Quick Reference

A panel is the formal link and long-term, ongoing relationship between primary care physicians and providers and their patients. Panel size is the number of individual patients under the care of a specific provider. A standard panel size for all family physicians does not exist, but physicians can define their ideal panel size using approaches that take into account the supply and demand of services in their local context.

Establishing a manageable panel size is necessary when balancing the workload for a busy practice. There is evidence that the quality of care, access to services, and continuity of care decreases when family physicians care for too many patients. Alternatively, if a panel size is not large enough, the family physician may not be able to financially support their practice and there might be increased unmet community need.



### Consider the following steps:



#### Health care system:

- **Provider remuneration:** Bear in mind the remuneration options available (if more than one) and how each might affect a manageable panel size.
- **Scope of practice of associates:** Build a team of health professionals to cater to the specific needs of your patient community.
- **Access:** Apply advanced scheduling techniques, such as same-day scheduling.



#### Practice context:

- **Population:** Keep in mind the complexity of needs in your patient population when defining and reviewing a manageable panel size.
- **Community:** The geographic location of a practice has bearing on panel size; take into account things such as population density and socioeconomic need when considering panel size.
- **Physician characteristics:** Know your own style—each individual panel size should be set to make the best use of your own practice characteristics and preferences (e.g., fast or slow consultations).



#### Organization of practice:

- **Human resources:** Well-organized human resources, with the right team members for the needs of the practice, offer effective support for a larger panel; consider part-time staffing structures to better meet the needs of the practice and patient group.
- **Office infrastructure:** Well-integrated electronic medical records used by trained staff help support a larger panel size by making scheduling, reporting, and collaborating more efficient.



For more information about managing panel size in the [Patient's Medical Home](#) and for details about resources available to you, refer to the Best Advice guide [Panel Size](#).

<http://patientsmedicalhome.ca>

<http://patientsmedicalhome.ca/resources/best-advice-guides/best-advice-guide-panel-size>