



Check your practice: Timely access to appointments in the Patient's Medical Home

Best Advice Guide: Quick Reference

Timely access has been rated by patients as one of the most important elements of primary care. To achieve timely access to appointments, family practices are employing same-day/advanced access scheduling.

Do today's work today by mixing pre-scheduled appointments with same-day scheduling. The goal of every practice should be to implement a system that assures appropriate timely access to appointments for all patients.

Timely access is easier to deliver when working in teams with a broad range of colleagues, such as other family physicians, nurses, and additional health care professionals and administrative supports. By offering extended office hours in which responsibilities are shared among the team, patients' after-hours needs can be met.



Consider the following steps for your practice:



Reduce the complexity of your scheduling system to just three kind of appointments with one standard length of time:

- Personal: Your patient is seeing you
- Team: Your patient is seeing someone else on your clinical team in your absence
- Unestablished: Patients who are not linked with a particular physician



The following points can help you understand the challenges associated with transforming from a traditional appointment booking system:

- Move toward advanced access by working down your backlog of appointments
- Roll out the new system by showing, not telling, patients how it works
- Begin offering all patients an appointment on the day they call your office
- If patients do not want to be seen on the day they call, schedule an appointment of their choosing
- Allow physicians to pre-schedule patients when it is clinically necessary
- Make sure each physician has a panel size that is manageable, based on their scope of practice, patient mix, and time spent in the office
- Develop plans for how your practice will handle times of extreme demand or physician absence
- Reduce future demand by maximizing today's visit



For more practical strategies that support timely access to appointments in the **Patient's Medical Home**, and for resources available to you, please refer to **Best Advice: Timely Access to Appointments in Family**.

<http://patientsmedicalhome.ca>

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