

# Manage and prevent missed appointments

## Failed, Broken, and Rescheduled Appointments Explained

**Failed appointment:**

- A failed appointment is a no-show patient who isn't there at the appointment time and has given no notice of this.

**Broken appointment:**

- A broken appointment is an appointment that is canceled or changed with less than 24 hours' notice.

**Rescheduled appointment:**

- A rescheduled appointment is when a patient calls more than 24 hours in advance of the appointment to change it.

## Preventing Missed Appointments

**Document Missed Appointments:**

- Record missed appointment frequency and reasons.
- Contact patients to understand their reasons.
- Log data in the management system.

**Proactive Reminders and Encouragement:**

- Ask for specific reasons when canceling or rescheduling.
- Identify patterns like time of day, days, or procedures linked to cancellations.

**Implement Management Systems:**

- Adjust scheduling based on patterns.
- Create reminders for common reasons.
- Refine strategies using updated data.

## Training patients to keep appointments

**Prevention Through Clear Communication:**

- Inform new patients of missed appointment policies during registration and each booking.

**Proactive Reminders and Encouragement:**

- Remind patients of the 24-hour notice requirement and the value of their appointment.

**Behavioral Training and Immediate Rescheduling:**

- Train front desk staff to express empathy and disappointment.
- Encourage immediate rescheduling instead of an open-ended option.

## What to do when a patient misses their first appointment?

**Address the Missed Appointment:**

- Explain the 24-hour notice policy and the account lock.
- Offer an exception for the first missed appointment.
- Document the incident in the patient's chart.

**Highlight the Impact of the Missed Appointment:**

- Explain how missed appointments affect the practice and other patients waiting for care.
- Stress that last-minute cancellations make it difficult to reschedule other patients.

## What to do when a patient misses multiple appointments?

**Lock Account for Repeated Missed Appointments:**

- If a patient misses two appointments and has been warned, lock their account.

**Follow-Up After No-Show:**

- Express disappointment by phone or letter, then take appropriate actions (lock account, deposit, or waiting period).

**Rescheduling Conditions:**

- To reschedule, ask for a deposit, or lock the account and require an in-person signature or payment.

## How do locked accounts work?

**Account Locking Process:**

- Patients are informed that they can't book future appointments until they visit the clinic to sign paperwork. A waiting period may follow before they can reschedule.

**Monitoring and Prevention:**

- Train the front desk team to track missed appointments, log reasons, and spot patterns through reports. Continuous focus on patient re-education helps prevent future missed appointments.

## Missed appointments—key takeaways

**Effective Appointment Management:**

- Ensure patients understand the appointment system, including the 24-hour notice policy for rescheduling.
- Express disappointment when an appointment is missed and record all cancellations or changes.
- Implement consequences for repeat offenders, such as locking accounts, requesting deposits, or imposing waiting periods.