

Reactivation Program for Overdue Patients

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Any of your patients who haven't been seen for 18 months or longer may be well on their way to becoming *former* patients. Even if you currently have an abundance of new patients showing up at your practice, initiating a reactivation program makes sense in today's competitive dental market. Follow this process:

1. Start by identifying inactive patients.

If you haven't been tracking overdue patients, direct your staff to review and sort all patient records, creating a database of those who haven't come to the practice for 18–36 months (any patients absent longer than three years are highly unlikely to return). To prevent procrastination, set a deadline of 30 days for accomplishing this step.

2. Consider offering an incentive to return.

Be prepared to entice lapsed patients back to your practice with a “free” doctor exam or hygiene check to see if any oral health problems have developed since their last visit. Worked into openings in your schedule, these appointments will cost you little or nothing, show that you care, and hopefully restart patient/practice relationships. If you're hesitant to make such an offer, try reactivating patients without it and then, if results are disappointing, add the incentive.

3. Make scripted phone calls to inactive patients.

Write a script that includes key message points—concern about the patient's oral health, availability of appointment times, incentive offered (if appropriate), updating contact information, etc.—and train staff to use it properly. Set aside blocks of time when reactivation calls are to be made, and establish quotas for how many calls each team member should make every week. Call cell phone numbers when possible. If patients aren't reached, continue to follow up for three weeks.

4. Send emails or letters to those not reached by phone.

Prepare standardized messages, using many of the same points made in the phone scripting, to send to patients you can't reach by phone. Patients who don't respond to the resulting emails or letters should probably be removed from your list of active patients.

5. When reactivated patients return, greet them enthusiastically.

At your daily business meetings, alert staff about returning patients so that everyone can make them feel welcome and thereby increase the likelihood of rekindling the relationship.

This reactivation program will ultimately increase production cost-effectively and strengthen the practice's foundation for future stability and growth.

Author



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