

The First Dental Appointment for New Patients

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In the course of a practice-patient relationship, the first dental appointment is a momentous event. Handled well by you and your staff, it will affirm the patients' decision to make an appointment at your practice and it will create an excellent, lasting impression.

To make the most of this opportunity and launch a long-term, mutually beneficial relationship, follow these steps:

- 1. Prepare systematically for new patients' arrival.** Among other objectives, your front desk coordinator should gather not only the typical patient information but also more personal facts—which will contribute to relationship-building. On the morning of the first visit, inform the team about new patients, including any personal details the front desk can share during the daily business meeting.
- 2. Follow a carefully planned welcoming protocol when they walk through the door.** All staff members who will interact with new patients should be scripted to provide a warm, enthusiastic welcome. While explaining amenities and other points of interest, the front desk coordinator should also build value for the practice. As other staff members take responsibility for the new patients, they should also help build the relationship in both professional and personal terms.
- 3. Make a strong impression chairside.** Demonstrate your professionalism and commitment to patient care by conducting a comprehensive exam and then presenting an equally comprehensive treatment plan. This will allow patients to take full advantage of the oral healthcare services your practice has to offer.
- 4. Schedule the next appointment.** Whether for treatment or hygiene, the next appointment should be arranged before patients leave. You'll be establishing a pattern for the future.
- 5. Ask for feedback.** Guided by scripting, your front desk coordinator should ask patients during checkout, *"How was your visit with us today?"* This will give patients more evidence that your practice strives for patient satisfaction. In addition, you'll get an idea of how well you're handling first visits.

This New Patient Experience will give your new patients ample reason to have confidence in your clinical capabilities and feel good about continuing the relationship.

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