

Patient Online - booking and cancelling appointments online

Why do it?

There are **many benefits** to patients booking and cancelling their own, and/or family members, appointments online. Practices with more patients registered for online services have been found to:



Receive fewer phone calls and face-to-face transactions with patients. This **releases time** for reception and administration staff to be spent on other tasks.

Improve contact with care services by becoming more accessible to patients with different access needs.



Have **more available phone lines** for patients who still wish to contact the practice using the telephone.

Improve **communication with their patients**, leading to higher levels of convenience.



Have a **reduction in the number of “did not attends” (DNAs)** as it is easier for patients to cancel or re-book appointments online.

Increase the number and type of appointments available to book online as the service has shown to be more beneficial.



What if:

Please do:

Practices are offering more than GP appointments and patients may book the wrong appointment type?

Provide patients with an appointments **‘how to’ guide** so they understand how to use the system.

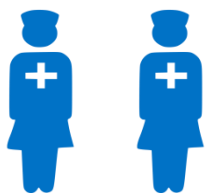
Patient may abuse the system and book more appointments than necessary?

-Limit the number of appointments that a patient is able to book.
-Use your ability to revoke their use, if a patient is misusing the system.

Patients don’t see the benefits because their practice is not offering enough/timely appointments.

Open up **all routine appointments** for online services, so that patients booking online have exactly the same choice as patients telephoning or visiting the practice.

How to do it?



- Make **more appointments** available online and consider opening up nurse appointments.
- Limit the number of bookable appointments online to one nurse and one GP appointment so that patients can't **book more than one appointment in advance**.
- Encourage new patients to **register for online services** and include the registration forms in the welcome packs.
- Have a **display wall** promoting online services – place the appointments poster next to the DNA stats.
- Ask reception staff to **inform patients** who call to cancel their appointments that they can do it online and encourage them to register.
- **Update your website** and include a link to online services from the home page. Include a banner 'Save Time-Do It Online!' at the top of the page so it stands out, with a link to the 'appointments page'.
- Change your **telephone answer message** – “You can book/cancel your appointment online, and explain reasons why.”
- Use **system reports** to identify all the patients that did not keep or cancel an appointment and promote online services to them.

More information:

- www.england.nhs.uk/patient-online
- <http://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/patientonline>
- Email: England.patient-online@nhs.net

Order promotional materials:

Visit www.england.nhs.uk/materialsforpatient/ and order posters, leaflets, appointment cards, bunting, balloons and more, **free of charge**.