



University Dental Practice

Failure to Attend (FTA) & Short Notice Cancellation (SNC) Policy

At University Dental Practice, we are committed to providing safe, timely, and high-quality dental care to all our patients. As demand for NHS dental services continues to rise, it is essential that our appointment system runs as efficiently as possible. Unfortunately, when patients do not attend their appointments or cancel with very little notice, valuable clinical time is lost. This prevents other patients, many of whom may be in pain or urgently waiting for treatment from receiving the care they need. This policy explains what constitutes a Failure to Attend, how we manage missed appointments, and how we work together with our patients to reduce FTAs and improve access for everyone.

What Is Considered a Failure to Attend (FTA)?

A **Failure to Attend** means any of the following:

- **Not arriving for an appointment**
- **Arriving too late to be seen** (which results in the appointment being unusable)
- **Cancelling with less than 24 hours' notice**

Short Notice Cancellations (SNCs) have the same impact as failures to attend because the appointment cannot usually be offered to another patient in time.

Why Missed Appointments Matter

Missed appointments affect both the practice and other patients:

- They take away appointment slots from patients who urgently need care.
- They increase waiting times for routine and emergency appointments.
- Staff time is used contacting and rescheduling patients who did not attend.
- NHS resources are wasted, reducing our ability to provide timely access for all.

We understand that unexpected events can happen. However, repeated FTAs make it difficult for us to provide a reliable and fair service to all patients.

How FTAs and SNCs Are Managed

To ensure fairness and consistency, University Dental Practice follows the steps below.

First Occurrence

If a patient fails to attend or cancels with short notice for the **first time**, we will contact them by **email, SMS, phone, or letter** to let them know.

This is a gentle warning to explain the impact of missed appointments and to remind them of our FTA policy.

We also explain that if another FTA/SNC occurs, we will not be able to offer any further **NHS appointments** at the practice.



Second Occurrence (within 12 months)

If a second FTA or short-notice cancellation occurs **within a 12-month period**, the patient will receive a formal notification (email, SMS, or letter) confirming:

- They can **no longer be seen as an NHS patient** at University Dental Practice.
- Information will be provided on how to access another NHS dentist.
- The patient may appeal if there are special circumstances they believe should be considered. We always review appeals with care and compassion, and each case is considered individually.

Avoiding FTAs

Working Together

If you cannot attend your appointment or no longer require it, please let us know as soon as possible. By doing so, you allow us to offer your space to another patient who needs it.

How to Cancel an Appointment

You can cancel an appointment in the following ways:

1. In person at reception
2. By telephone
3. By email
4. Through our website enquiry form

Reducing FTAs

What We Do

We take several steps to help patients remember and manage their appointments:

- When booking an appointment at the practice, we provide **written appointment confirmation** that includes our phone number and email.
- For appointments booked over the phone, we strongly recommend that patients record the date and time themselves (in a diary, calendar, notes app, etc.).
- With your consent, we will send **SMS or email reminders** before your appointment, including instructions on how to cancel if needed.
- We take care to communicate effectively with all patients, including those with language, literacy, or visual challenges.
- Discretion is used on a case-by-case basis to avoid disadvantaging patients in the case of genuine hardship, misunderstandings and other unavoidable circumstances.

Patient Responsibilities

To help us maintain an efficient service for all patients, we ask that you:

- Keep your contact details updated.



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- Attend all appointments on time.
- Cancel or reschedule with as much notice as possible.
- Inform us promptly if you can no longer attend.

Working together helps ensure that appointments remain available to those who need them most.

**University Dental Practice
Management Team**