

Appointment System Policy

This is the appointment policy for The Channings Dental Practice. This policy covers how dental appointments are managed at the practice. It details what patients can expect from us with regards to their appointments, and also what we expect in return.

Here at The Channings we operate an appointment system to see our clinicians. We do **not** operate a 'walk-in' clinic at any time.

Booking an appointment

1. All appointments with our clinicians, be it with the dentist, dental therapist, hygienist, or clinical technician, must be pre-booked.
2. This could be done by:
 - a. Telephoning reception on 01656 783403
 - b. Arranging it at reception in person
 - c. Emailing the practice (thechannings@tiscali.co.uk)
 - d. Direct messaging via one of our social media platforms (Facebook or X formerly known as Twitter)
3. It is normal for our reception team to ask the reason for the appointment. This ensures that the patient is triaged properly so that the correct appointment is booked with the appropriate clinician with the right amount of time allocated.
4. The appointment, unless stated otherwise, is for one patient only. The patient may not assume that by booking an appointment other members of their household, for example, can be seen at that appointment without prior notifying the practice.
5. Whilst all efforts will be made to try to find a convenient appointment for everyone, this is not always possible. We have a limited number of emergency appointments available everyday.
6. If the patient wishes to be seen on the same day (because there is a problem that cannot wait), they should contact the practice as early as possible and be prepared to be flexible with the appointment times. Every effort will be made to see them on the same day but we are unable to guarantee this.
7. We do not routinely pre-book appointments and then 'send them out' to patients. All appointments should be booked in the presence of the patient or their guardian/parent/carer.

Attending an appointment

1. It is the patient's responsibility to turn up on time for their appointment. If the patient is late for their appointment it is at the discretion of the clinician whether they are seen or not. Whilst we will make every effort to see them it might not be possible to do so, or it may involve a significant delay.
2. If the patient is unable to attend their appointment they should contact the practice at least 24 hours in advance.
3. If a patient fails to attend their appointment it will be marked as so on their records. If they contact us after their appointment time to cancel their appointment it will be considered as a Fail to Attend. If they do not turn up on time and are unable to be seen it will be considered as a Fail to Attend.
4. Please see our "Fail to Attend" policies for more details on short notice cancellations and failed appointments.
5. It is the patient's responsibility to check in at reception when they arrive. They cannot rely on the reception team to 'spot them' especially during busy times.
6. It is the patient's responsibility to let a member of staff know if, after checking in, they have to leave the premises for a short period of time (to pay for parking, for example). Our clinical team can then work around this.
7. There will be times when our clinical team have to deal with complex medical and dental issues and might be running late. Every effort is made to run on time but sometimes that is not possible. We will endeavour to inform the patients impacted if this is the case.
8. We reserve the right to ask patients with heavily soiled clothing, such as coats/shoes covered in animal faeces, to remove their clothing before entering our surgeries. Declining to do so might result in them not being seen.
9. Patients are reminded to be courteous to our staff and to other members of the public whilst on our premises. Whilst we appreciate that patients might be in severe dental pain, it is not a reason for them to behave aggressively or violently towards any members of our team.

Cancelling an appointment

1. If the patient is unable to attend their appointment they should contact the practice at least 24 hours in advance.
2. If a patient fails to attend their appointment it will be marked as so on their records. If they contact us after their appointment time to cancel their appointment it will be considered as a Fail to Attend. If they do not turn up on time and are unable to be seen it will be considered as a Fail to Attend.

3. Please see our “Fail to Attend” policies for more details on short notice cancellations and failed appointments.
4. Patients can cancel their appointments by:
 - a. Telephoning reception on 01656 783403
 - b. Arranging it at reception in person
 - c. Emailing the practice (thechannings@tiscali.co.uk)
 - d. Direct messaging via one of our social media platforms (Facebook or X formerly known as Twitter)
5. There will be times when we might have to cancel or reschedule an appointment. This could be due to staff absence, delay in the return of laboratory work, trying to accommodate extra emergency patients (such as a child in pain), or unforeseen circumstances. We apologise for any inconvenience caused but every effort will be made to arrange another convenient appointment as soon as possible.
6. If we need to cancel an appointment we will do so by telephone. If we are unable to reach the patient via telephone we will leave a message on their voicemail if such a facility is available. We will try to contact the patient via their mobile phone in the first instance, before trying them on any other contact numbers that we have been given. We will try to follow up the voicemail message by telephoning them again or by sending an SMS message to their mobile phone. We can also try to follow up by e-mail or by post.

Emergency appointments

1. It is normal for our reception team to ask the reason for the appointment. This ensures that the patient is triaged properly so that the correct appointment is booked with the appropriate clinician with the right amount of time allocated.
2. The patients with the most urgent problems, or patients who are the most vulnerable (those who are immunocompromised, for example) where a dental problem can manifest into dangerous systemic sequelae, will be prioritised.
3. If the patient wishes to be seen on the same day (because there is a problem that cannot wait), they should contact the practice as early as possible and be prepared to be flexible with the appointment times. Every effort will be made to see them on the same day but we are unable to guarantee this.
4. The practice is not able to guarantee that definitive treatment will be completed at the emergency appointment; our directive is to deal with the emergency first.
5. If there is more than one matter that needs to be dealt with for the patient, the practice will deal with the most urgent matter first. We are unable to guarantee that all matters can be dealt with at the initial emergency appointment.

6. Emergency appointments are reserved for patients who are on our list of patients which include the following:
 - a. Patients who are currently registered with one of our dental plans;
 - b. Patients who are currently registered as a private patient;
 - c. Patients who are considered to be a “historic patient” according to the Welsh Government’s definition (someone who has been seen at the practice in the “previous four financial years”).
7. Under current arrangements with the Local Health Board, we also provide appointments on specific days, as agreed between the practice and the health board, to see new urgent patients referred to us by the Urgent Dental Hub. The emergency slot is reserved only for these patients. We are unable to offer these slots to any other patients who are not referred to us from the Urgent Dental Hub.

Recalls

1. Patients will be informed by the clinical team on their recall interval following the conclusion of their course of treatment. This is based on their risk of developing dental diseases such as caries (dental decay), oral cancer, or periodontal disease (gum disease).
2. The recall interval is usually between 3 months to 2 years.
3. Whilst the practice may sometimes be able to book the patient in for their next appointment according to their recall interval, this is not always possible.
4. The practice endeavours to send out recall reminders as close to when the patient is due as logistically possible. However, it is the patient’s responsibility to make a note as to when they are due for their next appointment.
5. Recall reminders can be sent by email, SMS or letter. We are unable to ensure the patient has received or read the communication.
6. It is the patient’s responsibility to keep us up to date with their contact details.
7. The practice reserves the right to not send out reminders at any time due to logistic reasons. This could be that the appointment book is already very busy and booked weeks ahead, or staff absence, or other unforeseen circumstances.
8. The patient cannot use the excuse of not having received a reminder to lose their registration. It is the patient’s responsibility to make a note as to when they are due for their next recall appointment.

References

1. Management of acute dental problems (SDCEP) <https://www.sdcep.org.uk/published-guidance/acute-dental-problems/>
2. Emergency Dental Care (SDCEP) <https://www.sdcep.org.uk/published-guidance/emergency-dental-care/>

