



The No Show Nullifier Protocol

Most practices can benefit from an increased appointment utilization ratio, especially in hygiene where no shows can be common without a strict approach. To decrease the number of cancellations, implement the No Show Nullifier protocol to ensure patients confirm their appointments and attend.

Assign one employee to be the Confirmation Ninja whose job is to get patients to confirm their appointments and fill any openings created by unconfirmed appointments.

Starting 2 weeks in advance, utilize automated email or text reminders with easy click confirmations. Use specific wording that confirmation is required if they wish to hold onto their slot, and hit them up again 1 week in advance if they don't respond the first time. Most patients will confirm their appointment through this method.

For those who do not respond to automated confirmations, implement the following:

- Five days before the appointment, bombard patients with calling, texting, and emailing to get a response. Patients will quickly learn to confirm their appointment to avoid repeated messages.
- Three days before the appointment, give a final "confirm or else" message, explaining that their appointment will be given away if it is not confirmed by the end of the day.
- Two days before the appointment, move any unconfirmed appointments to a side column and notify the patient that their appointment has been canceled, opening their slots for other patients. Then begin moving patients from the next week's schedule or the ASAP list into the newly opened slots.

- One day prior to the appointment: Continue active efforts to fill any open slots. Just passively waiting for the phone to ring just doesn't cut it anymore.

It is important to follow through with giving away unconfirmed appointments to replace unconfirmed patients with patients who will attend. For practices with limited staff available to fill openings, it may be necessary to give the "confirm or else" message four or five days before the appointment to allow more time to fill the open appointment slot.

In the rare instance that an unconfirmed patient arrives for their appointment, there are several options:

- Work them into the hygienist's schedule.
- Work them into the dentist's schedule, possibly completing x-rays and an exam, or beginning treatment that is already planned.
- Reschedule their appointment for another day.

Any of these options allows the provider to educate the patient about the importance of confirming appointments. After a few cycles, patients will learn to confirm their appointments to avoid this hassle.

While this system will not eliminate cancellations altogether, it will dramatically reduce them. For patients who chronically cancel their appointments, only offer same-day scheduling. Avoid pre-scheduling unreliable patients in advance, since it just adds more work for you later to have to cancel their appointment and find a replacement last minute. Enforce cancellation fees by requiring patients to pay the fee before scheduling another appointment. This will encourage patients to attend scheduled appointments, and patients who are unwilling to comply may choose to leave the practice, which can be a benefit for the practice.

It is important to note that some patients will likely complain about the new confirmation system. However, sticking to this system will result in a more dependable patient base who value their appointments, as well as increased production.