

Hamilton Medical Centre

Billing, Fees, Patient Payments and Outstanding Accounts (Debtors) Policy and Procedures

Hamilton Medical Centre – Billings, Fees, Patient Payments, and Outstanding Accounts (Debtors) Policy and Procedures

This policy provides guidance to staff and patients about the Practice billing categories and types, fees, how patients can pay and what happens when patients fail to pay, following a consultation.

Billing and Fees

Policy

The Practice will always provide patients and stakeholders with sufficient information about the billing, fees, and the associated policy, to enable patients to give full financial consent for any consultations or treatments provided.

There are several ways that the Practice communicates with patients to advise of changes, updates and amendments to the billing policy and subsequent fee levels. These are;

- Face to face, either with clinical or non-clinical staff
- Notices in the waiting room, or other spaces, as appropriate
- Via the TV screens in the waiting room
- On the Practice website
- Posts on the Practice Facebook page.

The Practice operates a private billing fee structure. There are exceptions to this, where the practice will discount bill or bulk bill patients for certain services, or groups of people depending on predefined criteria.

Bulk Billing

Patients in the following groups will be bulk billed:

- Children - 12 years of age and under.
- DVA Gold Card
- DVA White Card - for consultations that solely relate to their accepted and approved conditions.

Patients accessing the following services will be bulk billed:

- Services that form part of a GP Management Plan (referred to as a GPMP or Care Plan)
- Health assessments
- Childhood immunisations.

The patient must be able to produce a current, valid Medicare or DVA card at the time of consultation, if required.

Discount Billing

Patients who hold the following (except for Compounding Chemist products, discussions, and appointments):

- Healthcare Concession cards (HCC)
- Pensioners Concession Cards (PCC).

The patient must be able to produce a current, valid HCC, PCC or DVA card at the time of consultation, if required.

Everyone else will be privately billed. Details of the item numbers, practice fees, rebates and out of pocket expenses, can be found on the Hamilton Medical Centre website, under fees.

Procedure

The Practice will review the categories, groups and services covered under the policy:

- Annually, or
- as and when there are changes to Medicare rules, item numbers and benefits, or
- there is a business requirement or need to do so.

Patient Payments and Outstanding Accounts (Debtors)

Policy

Patients who are privately or discount billed are expected to pay (as deemed in the Billing and Fees policy), at the time of their appointment. For the avoidance of doubt, anyone who does not pay at the time of their appointment or at the latest by the close of business on the day of the appointment, will be considered to have an outstanding account, and be categorised in the Practice Management Software as a debtor and fall under the remit of the policy.

Procedure – Patient Payments (Private and Discounted Billing)

Patients can pay for their appointments in a number of ways:

- For face-to-face appointments payment can be made using a debit, credit or eftpos card (via a Tyro machine) or cash
- For phone or telehealth appointments, the doctor will pass patients through to reception at the end of the consultation, to pay immediately with either a debit, credit or eftpos card
- If appointments have been booked online, we may process the payment using the stored card details
- Medicare rebates will be processed as part of this transaction
- Patients will be asked if they would like a receipt, if so, then a receipt will be provided.

Procedure – Patient Payments (Bulk Billing)

For bulk billed transactions, the patient will be asked to:

- Assign their benefits as full and final payment for the services provided by the doctor
 - This can be via either an electronic confirmation using the Medicare EasyClaim system, HotDoc link or by completion of a DB4 benefits form. Completed either by the patient or on behalf of the patient by an appropriate parent or guardian.

Procedure – Outstanding Accounts (Debtors)

Patients will be given;

- Three opportunities to pay
- The process will last a maximum of one month from the date of the appointment with the outstanding debt, before they are made inactive.

If a patient does not pay for their appointment either prior to, immediately after or by the end of the day of their appointment, the following process will apply:

- A text message will be sent to the patient before the close of business, at the latest, advising them that they have not paid and will need to call and pay the outstanding amount.
 - A record of the text being sent including the date and the time, will be placed on the patient's file.
- If no payment is received on the day, a call will be made to the patient's phone number or the second payment required text will be sent, the following morning. If there is no answer a message will be left, advising them of the unpaid account, the date and time of the unpaid appointment and the phone number to call back on to make payment.
 - A record of the phone call being made including the date and the time, will be placed on the patient's file.
 - A note will be placed on the patients file under Appointment Notes, saying:
 - *** No further appointments to be made, until account is settled. Outstanding Account xx/xx/xx ***
- If there is no response from the message, an email or letter will be sent to the patient up to 7 days later, from the Practice Manager, advising them that attempts have been made to contact them and to facilitate pay.
 - A record of the email being sent including the date and the time, will be placed on the patient's file.
- If no response is received or payment made, the patient will be made inactive up to 7 days from the date of the email.
 - A record of the patient being made inactive including the date and the time, will be placed on the patient's file.
 - If a patient has two instances of non-payment, up to the point of being inactivated in any rolling 12-month period, the third instance will trigger immediate and irreversible removal from the Practice.
 - For **NEW PATIENTS** to the Practice, who have been admitted on the understanding that we are a private billing Practice, if they fail to pay, they will be inactivated and not allowed to return.
- If no payment is received following the SMS, phone call and email, then the debt could be passed to a debt collection agency.
 - A record of the patient being sent to debt collection including the date and the time, will be placed on the patients file, with the note below under Appointment Notes:
 - ***Not to be readmitted as a patient. Outstanding Account xx/xx/xx – debt collection***
 - If the debit is unrecoverable, a note will be placed in the patients notes under Appointment Notes, saying:
 - ***Not to be readmitted as a patient. Outstanding Account xx/xx/xx – debt written off***

Did Not Attend (DNA and Cancellations)

Policy

DNAs and late cancellations are becoming more of an issue. There are a small number of persistent patients, who regularly DNA. This causes problems for the Practice in scheduling clinicians time, and makes it difficult for the administrative team to ensure that there are enough appointments made available for patients who need them.

The practice policy is to be understanding when there are extenuating circumstances, but to tackle repeat instances of DNA or late cancellations quickly, to ensure that the Practice is able to manage the appointment demand.

In the case of new patients, if they DNA or cancel their first appointment with less than 4 hours notice, they will be removed from our patient lists, and not be allowed to reenrol. A new patient appointment is a long appointment with the GP (30 mins) and a short appointment with the nurse (15 minutes). A DNA or late cancellation can leave 3 standard appointment gaps, which are unlikely to be filled. In addition, only a maximum of 3 new patient appointments will be allowed per GP in any one day. Unless the GP or Practice indicates otherwise.

If the patient cannot attend the same day, the Practice will use the PMS to DNA the appointment thus enabling the tracking of cancellations for medico-legal purposes. The practice cancellation policy applies.

Procedure

Each general practitioner and other healthcare provider (such as nurses and allied health) have specific times allocated to their consulting sessions to accommodate the need for interval times, short and long consultations, diagnostic tests, procedures etc.

Cancellations and 'no-shows' are monitored and marked accordingly in the appointments schedule and these patients are followed up as appropriate. Attempts to contact patients that fail to attend appointments are documented in the patient's health record.

At each occurrence of DNA or Cancellation, the DNA and Cancellation Policy, will determine the next steps. The three levels of DNA SMS will be sent as appropriate, using a rolling 12-month timeframe, as follows:

DID NOT ATTEND – 1st DNA

<Patient Given Name>, you missed an appt today at <Appointment Time>. To reschedule or discuss, pls call 49611713.

DID NOT ATTEND – 2nd DNA

<Patient Given Name>, you missed an appt today at <Appointment Time>. This 2nd DNA in 12 months incurs a \$40 fee. To reschedule or discuss, pls call 49611713.

DID NOT ATTEND – 3rd DNA

<Patient Given Name>, you missed an appt today at <Appointment Time>. This 3rd DNA in 12 months incurs a \$40 fee, your account is now inactive. To reschedule or discuss, pls call 49611713.

A note will be entered into the patients file, using autofills, then copied into the Appointment Notes section, as follows:

DID NOT ATTEND – 1st DNA - \$DNA1

1st DNA – xx/xx/xx.

DID NOT ATTEND – 2nd DNA - \$DNA2

2nd DNA – xx/xx/xx. \$40 fee added.

DID NOT ATTEND – 3rd DNA - \$DNA3

3rd DNA – xx/xx/xx. \$40 fee added, account inactivated.

DID NOT ATTEND – DNA (New Patient) - DNANEW

xx/xx/xx made inactive, outstanding account. New Patient, not allowed to be reactivated. NR

In addition, a letter will be emailed (or posted if there is no email on file) to the patient, different for each DNA, as above:

Did Not Attend (DNA) - 1st Instance in 12 Months

Dear <PtFirstName>,

This letter is to remind you of the appointment you missed at <Time of Missed Appointment> on <Date of Missed Appointment> with Dr. <DrFirstName>.

We understand that life can be unpredictable, however due to an increasing number of patients not showing up to appointments and patients cancelling appointments very late, we write to reaffirm our cancellation policy, as set out over the page. This policy enables us to better manage patients who miss appointments and allows us to continue providing a high level of service, to all patients.

If you have any questions or concerns, or would like to discuss extenuating circumstances, we can be contacted through at admin@hamiltonmedical.com.au, or by calling (02) 4961 1713.

Kind regards,

Hamilton Medical Centre Management

Did Not Attend (DNA) - 2nd Instance in 12 Months

Dear <PtFirstName>,

This letter is to remind you of the appointment you missed at <Time of Missed Appointment> on <Date of Missed Appointment> with Dr. <DrFirstName>.

We understand that life can be unpredictable, however due to an increasing number of patients not showing up to appointments and patients cancelling appointments very late, we write to reaffirm our cancellation policy, as set out over the page. This policy enables us to better manage patients who miss appointments and allows us to continue providing a high level of service, to all patients.

As this is the second DNA in 12 months, as per our cancellation policy a fee of \$40.00 has been added to your account. This can be paid over the phone or in person, and will need to be paid before you can book any further appointments.

If you have any questions or concerns, or would like to discuss extenuating circumstances, we can be contacted through at admin@hamiltonmedical.com.au, or by calling (02) 4961 1713.

Kind regards,

Hamilton Medical Centre Management

Did Not Attend (DNA) - 3rd Instance in 12 Months

Dear <PtFirstName>,

This letter is to remind you of the appointment you missed at <Time of Missed Appointment> on <Date of Missed Appointment> with Dr. <DrFirstName>.

We understand that life can be unpredictable, however due to an increasing number of patients not showing up to appointments and patients cancelling appointments very late, we write to reaffirm our cancellation policy, as set out over the page. This policy enables us to better manage patients who miss appointments and allows us to continue providing a high level of service, to all patients.

As this is the third DNA in 12 months, as per our cancellation policy a fee of \$40.00 has been added to your account, and you have been inactivated in our system. The fee(s) can be paid in person or over the phone. This will need to be paid before you can be reactivated, request repeat prescriptions, or book any further appointments.

If you have any questions or concerns, or would like to discuss extenuating circumstances, we can be contacted through at admin@hamiltonmedical.com.au, or by calling (02) 4961 1713.

Kind regards,

Hamilton Medical Centre Management

Did Not Attend (DNA) - New Patient

Dear <PtFirstName>,

This letter is to remind you of the appointment you missed at <Time of Missed Appointment> on <Date of Missed Appointment> with Dr. <DrFirstName>.

We understand that life can be unpredictable, however due to an increasing number of patients not showing up to appointments and patients cancelling appointments very late, we write to reaffirm our cancellation policy, as set out over the page. This policy enables us to better manage patients who miss appointments and allows us to continue providing a high level of service, to all patients.

As you are a new patient and did not attend a scheduled appointment, as per our cancellation policy a fee of \$40.00 has been added to your account, and you have been inactivated in our system. In addition, as per our policy, you have been removed from our patient lists and will no longer be able to book any further appointments with us.

If you have any questions or concerns, or would like to discuss extenuating circumstances, we can be contacted through at admin@hamiltonmedical.com.au, or by calling (02) 4961 1713.

Kind regards,

Hamilton Medical Centre Management

DNA and Cancellation Policy

When patients are unable to attend scheduled appointments, we ask that a minimum of 4 hours notice is provided to give other patients the chance to use the appointment.

If less than 4 hours notice is provided, or a patient does not show for a scheduled appointment with no notice, the following will occur:

1st Missed Appointment (in any rolling 12 month period):

- 1. An SMS will be sent to the patient's registered mobile informing them of the missed appointment.**
- 2. A letter will be sent to the patient's mailing email or mailing address informing them of the missed appointment.**

2nd Missed Appointment (in any rolling 12 month period):

- 1. An SMS will be sent to the patient's registered mobile informing them of the missed appointment.**
- 2. A letter will be sent to the patient's email or mailing address informing them of the missed appointment.**
- 3. A \$40 administration fee will be applied to the patient's account, this will need to be paid before any further appointments can be booked.**

3rd Missed Appointment (in any rolling 12 month period):

- 1. An SMS will be sent to the patient's registered mobile informing them of the missed appointment.**
- 2. A letter will be sent to the patient's email or mailing address informing them of the missed appointment.**
- 3. A further \$40 administration fee will be applied to the patient's account.**
- 4. The patient will be made inactive in our system.**
- 5. All outstanding DNA fees will need to be paid before the patient will be reactivated in our system.**

New Patient

- 1. An SMS will be sent to the patient's registered mobile informing them of the missed appointment.**
- 2. A letter will be sent to the patient's mailing address informing them of the missed appointment.**
- 3. A \$40 administration fee will be applied to the patient's account and written off.**
- 4. The patient will be made inactive in our system, removed as a current patient and will not be able to book any further appointments**