



section

How to Handle Patient Complaints

- It is impossible to make everyone happy all the time, and complaints are bound to happen within the medical field as often as in any other service industry. Disgruntled patients come with the territory and while you cannot eliminate potential issues completely, you can handle them in a way that benefits everyone. Follow these six steps for how to handle patient complaints that will leave patients feeling satisfied and heard.
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As basic as it may sound, this is your first and most important step when dealing with an unhappy patient. Most of the time, people just want to vent their frustrations to someone who is willing to listen. Be sure to give them your undivided attention, keep eye contact and truly hear what they have to say. Do not argue or pass blame, and be sure to control your emotions. Summarize what they have said to you so they know that you were listening. Remember that your ultimate goal is to retain this patient.

Listen to them.

- Empathy is key when it comes to successfully handling patient complaints. Keep in mind that this person is a patient, he or she may not feel well or just received an unfortunate diagnosis. Put yourself in the patient's shoes and let him or her know that you understand their frustrations presented in this instance. Demonstrate to them that you care and that his or her feelings are valid.

Acknowledge their feelings.

- Get as much information as possible. This will best help you and your staff figure out how to handle the complaint and avoid any issues that could arise in the future.

Ask questions.

- Let the patient know that the complaint is being taken seriously and suggest solutions. Explain that it will be reviewed and discussed among the management. Inform the patient that you will follow up with them after the grievance has been thoroughly investigated. It is best practice to offer a time frame as to when the patient can expect a communication regarding the issue.

Explain and take action

- Always thank patients for taking the time to speak with you and bringing the matter to your attention. Ensure they understand that their satisfaction and is your number one priority.

Conclude

- Formally document any patient complaints, whether big or small. It is crucial that there is a protocol for handling these issues and ensuring grievances are followed up internally. If you promised to touch base with the patient, be sure to do so in a timely manner.
- Patient complaints can be uncomfortable and frustrating, but try to stay positive. View complaints as an opportunity to learn and build upon that to provide an amazing office experience. Complaints are part of working in a medical field and should be expected. How you handle them and learn from them is what will set you apart from the competition.

Document complaints



If you have any tips on how to deal with patient complaints

Plan your interaction in advance

Pay attention to nonverbal communication

Discuss with colleagues and do not hesitate to seek additional training should this be required

Look for signs of anger or distress

Ensure safety and maintain control

Create bridges of communication and trust

Explain the difficulty and try to find common ground

Help your patient get emotional control

Focus on highlighting solutions and resolve areas of disagreement

Tips on managing difficult interactions

