# Follow-Up Contacts

Maintaining contact with patients between appointments is an important way to build patient loyalty and assure a long-term relationship. Patients are impressed with the practice that shows concern for them following or between appointments as well as when they are in the dental chair.

Follow-up contact can be made by the dentist(s) or by team members. Typically, however, it is the dentist who contacts those patients who have had extensive treatment, usually with a telephone call the evening following treatment. Other than that one exception, team members often make most follow-up contacts.

**To organize the efforts:**

**Decide who should be called, emailed, or written following an appointment for:**

- New examinations
- Emergency care
- Full-banded orthodontic case
- Patients who had extensive restorative treatment
- Prosthetic or orthodontic device delivery
- Patients who had to wait past their appointment time for more than 20 to 30 minutes due to some unforeseen circumstance
- Patients requesting records sent to another local dentist

**Who on staff should make the contact?**
Rotate the privilege between the dentist, clinical team members, and business team members. As mentioned above, the dentist may call patients who had extensive treatment that day. Clinical staff may call patients who had routine questions following treatment or follow-up with parents to see how children did following treatment. Business staff may call patients requesting records be forwarded or those who seemed confused about financial arrangements.

**When is contact made?**
Call the patients seen that day at day's end. Mail or email a note to thank new exams for choosing your office within a day or two of their initial appointment. Call new examination patients who left the first appointment without scheduling diagnosed treatment within a week to gently urge them to schedule. Call or email patients whom you refer to a specialist to see how their treatment in that office is progressing within a month of the appointment at which you referred them.

**How does the staff member-correspondent receive names to contact?**
Either note "FC" (Follow-up Contact) on the patients' charts so that contact information can be recorded by day's end; or log those patients who need follow-up into the computer so that a list with contact information can be generated by day's end. A business staff member should be responsible for distributing each day's contact list to the person who will be making calls, sending emails, etc.

**What type of record of contacts should be kept?**
A daily log, on computer or manually kept, may be maintained listing: (1) patient's name, (2) reason for contact, (3) type of contact made, and (4) patient response. From this log the contact information is distributed at the end of each day to the dentist or staff member who will make contact. The contact should also be noted on the patient's chart.

Follow-up contacts are an effective way to say to patients, "We were glad to see you in our office. We care about you, and we thought about you after you left. We're looking forward to seeing you again. We appreciate your referral of family and friends." These are the types of messages you want your patients to receive.