

Practice facilities

It is essential that practice facilities are safe for GPs, practice staff and patients. Patients must be provided auditory and visual privacy during consultations, such as the use of curtains, screens, drapes and gowns. Health and safety requirements cover both consultation areas and all others areas of the practice.

RACGP 4th Edition Standards

5.1.1✓ *Our practice facilities are appropriate for a safe and effective environment for patients and the practice team.*

Assessment methods

- Tour of the practice premises

Surveyors will tour the practice on the day of the visit to review practice facilities. Consultation rooms used must be fitted out appropriately, including being free from excessive noise, having adequate lighting, having an examination couch, being maintained at a comfortable ambient temperature, and ensuring patient privacy when a patient needs to undress for a clinical examination. The waiting area must be sufficient to accommodate the usual number of patients waiting at any given time, and toilet and hand cleaning facilities must be readily accessible. The practice must have one or more height adjustable beds available at the practice, and surveyors will expect to see this on the day of the visit.

- Interview with GPs and practice staff

Surveyors will interview GPs, clinical and administrative staff, who should all be able to confidently describe and/or demonstrate how the practice's facilities ensure a comfortable and safe environment for patients and staff. Staff should be able to confirm how official practice documentation, such as prescription pads, is securely stored, as well describe how the requirements outlined in the above assessment method are managed.

Meeting the Standards

It's essential that each GP working on any given day has his or her own dedicated consulting room to work from. A new requirement of the 4th Edition Standards is the need for practices to have at least one height adjustable bed available. Office equipment should be out of the reach of unauthorised persons, such as the fax machine or photocopier not being accessible to waiting patients.

Best practice

Ideally the layout of the premises will encourage auditory privacy. Many design and layout factors can contribute to protecting patient privacy and confidentiality, for example, positioning waiting room chairs in such a way as to decrease the likelihood of conversations being overheard at the reception counter. Most practices have toilets and hand washing basins available onsite, which is preferable, however it is acceptable for toilets to be located nearby if still easily accessible to patients and staff. Ideally, the waiting area will include a dedicated children's area, or have items available to cater to waiting children, such as books, toys and colouring pencils. Ideally, the practice's policies and procedures manual will describe practice facilities details also.