

Telephone Techniques

Possessing a great telephone manner and quality technique is a key ingredient when providing a high standard of customer service. When working in a medical centre, an efficient and professional telephone technique reflects an efficient and professional practice. The person who answers the telephone is the caller's first point of contact with the practice. From this first impression, a caller (for example, a patient) may decide, 'I'd like to go to this practice' or 'They weren't helpful at all, I won't be attending that practice as a patient'.

There are a number of elements that should be factored into the development of a pleasant and professional telephone voice and technique including:

- Smiling when you answer calls
- Speaking clearly
- Varying your tone
- Keeping your voice at an appropriate volume, and
- Pausing between phrases or sentences.

Most practices have policies and procedures for answering the telephone, and it is of vital importance that you learn and adhere to the protocols in place. Some of the specific policies and procedures may be attending to a call within a certain number of rings, a standard greeting, screening doctor(s) calls and speaking with patients requesting test results over the phone.

When working in a medical practice, at times the telephone and your other work will be quiet. At other times you want ten pairs of hands for the telephone and the additional duties. It is annoying, and potentially dangerous, from a patient perspective to be told to hold the line when telephoning a practice for medical assistance. The importance of the receptionist determining the reason for the call before putting the caller on hold cannot be emphasized enough. In a general practice environment, emergencies are bound to occur and, whatever the situation, putting callers on hold without asking first is unsafe.

What do all callers want? What you can deliver:

- Dependable, efficient courteous and friendly service
- Correct information
- Someone who listens and shows interest
- Someone with knowledge who can answer questions
- Referral to the right person if necessary, and a positive attitude!