Patient Information Policies

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New Patient Acceptance Policy

We accept all fee-paying patients on a private basis.

The practice does not refuse to treat anyone on the grounds of:

- Race
- Religion
- Gender
- Sex
- Age
- Sexual orientation
- Appearance
- Disability
- Medical or Dental Condition

You will be advised which dentist you will be seeing when you book your first appointment.

In subsequent appointments, you will be offered the first available dentist unless you request a particular dentist, we will try our best to accommodate you.

Some of our practices have only one dentist, however, in any circumstance that we must place a locum dentist in that site (e.g. illness, holidays) you will be advised of this change.

Access & Emergency Treatment Policy

Century Dental Clinic WGC is open to treat patients during the following hours:

Monday: 08.00-13.00 & 14.00-17.30

Tuesday: 08.00-13.00 & 14.00-17.30

Wednesday: 08.00-13.00 & 14.00-17.30

Thursday: 08.00-13.00 & 14.00-17.30

Friday: 08.00-13.00 & 14.00-17.30

One Saturday a month: 09.00-14.00

Patients who feel they have a dental emergency will be assessed at the point of contact (either over the telephone or face-to-face at reception). The practice is under no obligation to see patients with a toothache. Toothache is not classed as an emergency (see below or emergency definitions).

At Century Dental Clinic we will endeavour to see patients with pain, swelling or trauma within 48 hours of initial contact, where possible. This applies to patients who attend examinations on a regular basis. If we are working at full capacity at any given time, we will manage the patient and refer them to another service if necessary.

Patients who are currently undergoing treatment and who have pain or swelling will be offered an appointment within 24 hours of initial contact.

During out-of-hours, there is an answer phone message advising patients of help available. Details of our out-of-hours arrangements will also be displayed at the entrance to the practice. This information will always be correct and up to date.

If you are a Denplan patient and you have a dental emergency out of hours, you can contact the Denplan emergency helpline on **0800 844 999**.

If you are a private patient and have a dental emergency out of hours, please call **0208 788 9999**, where you will be put through the Putney clinic for advice. Alternatively you can contact **111** to seek advice from an the NHS.

Definition of emergency

Fractured jaws – affects speech, teeth may not meet properly, swelling inside mouth, limited mobility, pain etc. Most commonly happens after an accident, blow to the chin etc.

Uncontrolled Bleeding – Any bleeding that cannot be controlled by firm continuous pressure from a pack for 10 minutes may need suturing. Most commonly happens after extraction, due to infection or alcohol, aspirin, drugs etc.

Loss of consciousness – No matter how brief, anyone who was unresponsive may have suffered internal brain damage that could worsen if left without investigation. Most commonly happens after a blow to the head or accident.

Cancellations, Failed and Missed Appointments Policy

We aim to provide all of our patients with the best possible service and to achieve this we need your cooperation.

It is inevitable that sometimes you may need to cancel or rearrange your dental appointments.

We would ask patients to give as much notice as possible when cancelling an appointment so we have the opportunity to offer it to someone else although we do understand that during an emergency this is not always possible. Non-attendance and cancellations at short notice without a valid reason deprive other patients of our services.

Appointments are often wasted as people do not attend. Over (insert total) appointments per month are being wasted. These appointments could have been used by other patients.

The first time a patient fails to attend a booked appointment we will send a letter or e-mail reminding them that in future they must cancel appointments if they are unable to attend.

After 3 of failed to attend letters or e-mails we will advise you that we will no longer be able to book further appointments without prior payment to secure the appointment.

An appointment is considered to have been broken if any of the following occur:

- the patient fails to show up for the appointment,
- the patient appears more than 20 minutes late for a scheduled appointment, or
- the patient calls to cancel an appointment with too little advance notice to allow that appointment time to be rescheduled with another patient (24 hours will be considered to be the minimum time necessary to avoid a broken appointment).

Patients who wish to cancel dental appointments must do so a minimum of 24 hours in advance of their scheduled appointment. If less notice is given without a valid excuse, the appointment will be considered to have been broken.

Cancellations due to illness

If you are showing symptoms of a stomach bug or a respiratory illness, including COVID, please let us know so we can rearrange your appointment for when you are feeling better. This also helps to keep our staff and other patients safe. The normal cancellation period will not apply in these circumstances.

Cold Sore Policy

Cold sores are common for many people in the UK. Like all viruses, they are contagious and pose a risk to others. The herpes simplex virus is spread through contact.

Cold sores usually emerge as a small ulcer-like patch on or surrounding the lip line, they can come up in a matter of hours and usually take between seven days and four weeks to heal, depending on the severity. From the time they begin to emerge to the point at which they are fully healed, they pose a contagion risk.

At Century Dental Clinic we ask patients that if they have had a cold sore for less than 2 weeks, please reschedule any non-emergency dental treatment or hygienist appointments until after this contagious period has passed. This is not only because of the high risk of spreading the virus but also because your lips may feel sore and could crack or bleed during treatment.

If urgent dental treatment is required (you are in pain and need immediate attention), our dentists will request that your cold sore be protected with a cold sore plaster to minimise the risk of cross-infection during emergency dental treatment.

If you do get a cold sore and you have a dental or hygienist appointment arranged, please call the practice with as much notice as possible, to reschedule any non-emergency treatment. You will not be charged a late cancellation fee if you cancel due to a cold sore.

Drugs and Alcohol Policy

The safety of our staff and patients is of upmost importance.

Treating patient who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol can be dangerous for several reasons including:

- difficulty in gaining informed consent
- the possibility that post-operative instructions will be forgotten
- increased bleeding risk

If we suspect a patient is chemically impaired, either through alcohol or drugs, including prescription drugs which may cause impairment, we will be unable to treat the patient and will ask to reschedule the appointment.

Patient Involvement Policy

We actively involve all our patients in every aspect of their dental care and as a practice, we aim to carry out the following;

- To ensure discussions take place in an environment where conversations are not overheard, and every effort is made to ensure the patient feels comfortable and relaxed.
- To identify whether communication aids are required, including the use of interpreters, to ensure that the patient fully understands explanations and discussions and can make informed choices.
- To identify patient treatment needs and treatment options, identifying also what they can do to manage their care.
- To discuss all care and treatment options, providing enough information on any risks involved and potential consequences of each option and, where possible, identifying relevant evidence, research, or experience.
- To record discussions in the patient's notes identifying the treatment needs, options discussed and patient's choice.
- To record the reason for and outcome of diagnostic tests and assessments are explained to the patient. These include, for example, radiographs, vitality tests, periodontal indices, and pathology tests.
- To ensure all staff at the practice understand the principles of patient confidentiality and routinely follow the practice procedure for ensuring confidentiality of patient information.

Code of Good Practice Policy

At Century Dental Clinic we listen to patients' views and learn from them. We communicate with patients in a courteous, friendly, professional manner.

Patients are provided with the standard of care that we would expect to receive ourselves and we make sure that patients receive full information about our services, their treatment and its cost.

We may refer patients for further professional advice and treatment where appropriate and we are committed to ensuring that we keep our professional skills and knowledge up to date.

In our practice, we will:

- Respect our patients' confidentiality
- Aim to ensure that patients should have to wait no longer than 20 minutes to be seen.
- Manage our appointment system so that treatment appointments are booked no more than 2 weeks ahead
- Deal with every telephone call promptly – callers will not be asked to 'hold' without first finding out why the call has been made
- Deal with correspondence within 3 days of receipt
- Provide patients with a treatment plan and estimate of costs for each new course of treatment. Full and specific consent will be gained.
- Make patients aware of our policy for collecting fees. Requests for payment will always be made courteously
- Make the practice policy for dealing with complaints known to patients. All complaints will be treated sympathetically and according to the agreed procedures.
- Provide the highest standards of infection control
- Provide any emergency treatment required during practice hours as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Practice Payment & Charges Policy

It is the responsibility of this practice to give patients full information about the cost of their dental care before any treatment is undertaken.

A list of common treatment charges is available at reception for treatments that are provided privately.

We will ensure that all patients:

- Are advised of what they must pay, when they should pay and how they can pay (e.g. card, direct transfer)
- Know what they will receive for their payment (i.e. what treatment or care)
- Understand their treatment is provided privately
- Are given a written estimate and treatment plan on request or where treatment involves more than routine preventive examination and hygiene care
- Understand their own responsibilities in terms of payment terms and how to avoid any penalty for overdue fees (missed appointment charges, late payment etc)
- Are not pressured into signing agreements or paying fees
- Obtain a receipt for any payments they make and can review their account details
- Can talk to a staff member who can explain clearly what payments are due and what they are for
- Can discuss with staff what treatment options and costs are available
- Are given an estimate where a precise cost cannot be determined in advance (e.g. laboratory work) and will receive timely advice of any additional costs where appropriate

We try to make payment as straightforward as possible.

Payment & Refund Policy

Payment Method

All major debit and credit cards are accepted including American Express.

Change of Details

You must inform the practice immediately of any changes to your contact details. Failure to do so will mean that we are not able to provide you with essential information and updates.

Cancellation of Courses of Treatment

If, for any reason, a course of treatment is cancelled, then we will make every reasonable effort to give the patient as much notice as possible. Century Dental Clinic's maximum liability will be limited to a refund of the advance payment fee ONLY. Refunds will be made by the method in which the treatment booking was paid. We will not accept liability for any additional costs or losses incurred by a patient or organisations, which are claimed to have arisen through treatment cancellation. We reserve the right to vary arrangements for the delivery of a treatment plan and in such cases will make reasonable efforts to inform patients in advance.

Cancellation by the Patient

You may cancel a course of treatment for which you have booked an appointment and be fully refunded all fees for treatment not yet performed; provided you give the practice a minimum of 24 hours prior notice.

If 24 hours prior notice is not received, we reserve the right to withhold a proportionate amount of money, based upon the length of the appointment, to cover overheads.

We will refund the money to patients who wish to discontinue treatment at any time. A notice period of 14 days is required upon which they will be eligible for a refund of any amount paid for treatment that they did not receive.

If a patient is receiving any treatment that involves laboratory work and initial work has been carried out; i.e. if the patient is having crowns/bridges or a denture made, and the work has already been started or completed by the laboratory, a proportion of the fee taken on the preparation appointment will be kept to cover the cost of the laboratory invoice.

If you have paid for services not yet provided that do not involve a laboratory fee, we will either credit your account or refund the transaction paid using the method by which the original payment was made. If the method was cash and you are unable to collect the refund in person, it will be posted to you in the form of a cheque.

Bad Debt Policy

This practice maintains a strict payment policy where all payments for dental treatment should be paid in full prior to the completion of treatment.

It is the discretion of the treating dentist as to whether the full payment is required before the start of treatment. Payments can be made by cash or by debit card. Credit card payments will also be accepted.

Card payments can be taken over the phone. If, for whatever reason, the fees are not paid, the practice will inform the patient via a text message/letter or email that there is money outstanding

on their account and to refer to our payment policy.

A second text message, letter or email will then be sent requesting immediate payment if payment is not paid within a seven-day period. If there has been no contact or payment within the next seven-day period then a third text message will be sent warning of losing the right to be seen at the practice with immediate effect.

If payment is not made within a further 24 hours, we will use a debt recovery company to recover the debt outstanding.

Zero Tolerance Policy

Staff treating patients have the right to work free from any threat or fear of abuse, violence or forms of aggression.

Unacceptable behaviour which will not be tolerated within the dental practice includes:

- Actual or threatened physical violence on staff or other patients.
- Psychological abuse of staff
- Verbal abuse, which includes shouting or swearing
- Racial abuse
- Sexual harassment or abuse
- Threats against practice personnel which occur in the workplace
- Theft or damage of practice property
- Taking drugs or alcohol on the premises

If any patient is abusive or violent towards any member of staff or any other persons on the practice premises, the practice retains the right to have the patient removed from their list. In extreme cases, the police may also be contacted.

All incidents must be reported to Amber Cousins and recorded within the Significant Events Log. Any injuries will be recorded in the accident book.

Document Control

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0.2	Final	17/04/23	HD	Added the Code of Good Practice Policy
0.3	Final	28/11/24	HD	Added Drugs & Alcohol Policy. Added info on cancellations due to illness.

The latest approved version of this document supersedes all other versions, upon receipt of the latest approved version all other versions should be destroyed, unless specifically stated that previous version(s) are to remain extant. If in any doubt, please contact the document Author.

Approved By: Amber Cousins, Stephen Salt
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