

In an ideal world, a dental practice would foster a lifelong relationship with every patient, working together to achieve and maintain optimal oral health. The hope is always to create a partnership where both the patient and dental professionals feel comfortable, understood, and aligned in their goals. However, the truth is that not all relationships work out perfectly. Just like any other relationship, compatibility, communication, trust, and mutual respect are key, and sometimes these elements may not align.

While the decision to dismiss a patient is never taken lightly and is viewed as a last resort, there are circumstances where it becomes necessary for the well-being of both parties.

Below are the top 10 reasons a dental office might find it necessary to dismiss a patient.

1. **Non-Compliance with Treatment Plans:** Patients who consistently refuse to follow recommended treatment plans may be dismissed, as it can create health risks and liability concerns.
2. **Repeatedly Missing Appointments:** Chronic cancellations or no-shows can disrupt the practice's schedule and impact other patients. If a patient repeatedly fails to show up without proper notice, dismissal may be considered.
3. **Unpaid Bills:** Failure to pay for services rendered, especially if there's a chronic pattern of non-payment, can lead to dismissal from the practice.
4. **Disruptive or Abusive Behavior:** If a patient is consistently rude, disruptive, or abusive towards staff or other patients, the dental office may decide to terminate the relationship to maintain a safe and respectful environment.
5. **Insurance or Financial Incompatibility:** Sometimes, financial or insurance-related reasons may lead to a patient's dismissal, especially if the practice cannot provide the necessary care within the patient's budget or insurance plan.
6. **Requesting Unethical Practices:** If a patient requests treatment that goes against the dentist's professional, ethical, or legal standards, it may lead to termination of the relationship.
7. **Multiple Providers/Dividing Care:** As in your previous example, if a patient insists on dividing care between different dental practices, it may cause complications and lead to dismissal from the practice.
8. **Substance Abuse Affecting Treatment:** Substance abuse can interfere with dental treatments and post-care healing. If the issue becomes a consistent problem and affects the patient's dental care, it may lead to dismissal.

9. Incompatibility with Practice's Philosophy: If there's a fundamental difference in philosophy between the patient and the practice (e.g., views on preventive care, aesthetics, etc.), it may not be possible to establish a successful dentist-patient relationship.
10. Patient's Request for Unnecessary Treatments: If a patient repeatedly insists on unnecessary treatments that the dentist feels are not in the patient's best interest, the dentist may decide to dismiss the patient to uphold their professional integrity.

It's essential to note that dismissing a patient is a serious decision and usually considered a last resort. It often involves a formal process, including proper documentation and communication, to ensure that the patient's rights and access to care are maintained. In many jurisdictions, legal and ethical obligations must be considered, and professional legal advice may be necessary.

Examples of Dismissal Letters

Patient Not Following Periodontal Recommendation

Subject: Discontinuation of Dental Services

Dear [Patient Name],

I hope this letter finds you well. After careful evaluation and discussions regarding your dental health, I am writing to inform you that I have reached a decision that I find necessary for your well-being.

The severity of your periodontitis has reached a point where I'm uncomfortable having you as a patient of record and not receiving the recommended treatment. Not only are your teeth at risk of being lost, but your general health is also on the line. I must stress that your condition requires immediate attention and thorough professional care.

I am recommending you receive a second opinion on your periodontal health from another dental provider. We will be available for emergencies for the next [insert time period here, e.g., 30 days] and will forward all your records at no charge to an office of your choice.

While we really do not want to lose you as a patient, we feel very strongly about our job as your dentist. If your philosophy and ours are not in line, then we feel it is best for both parties to have you find a dentist that you do align with.

Please know that this decision was not made lightly and was reached with your best interests in mind. I urge you to call us if you have any questions about your dental health, if you would like to discuss this treatment further, or if your new dentist needs additional information.

Thank you for entrusting us with your dental care. We wish you the best of luck with your future dental treatments and overall health.

Patient Not Following Treatment Plan

Subject: Recommendation to Seek Alternative Dental Care

Dear [Patient Name],

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to discuss a serious matter regarding your dental health and our professional relationship.

We have seen you twice now for your dental exams and cleanings. Unfortunately, you have quite a lot of active decay, which will lead to tooth loss and potential infection. I must express that I am uncomfortable watching you deteriorate and unwilling to supervise the process. Our office prides itself on doing whatever possible to make sure that our patients get the best dental care possible, which means taking steps to avoid future problems and pain.

Given the circumstances, I am recommending you seek a third dental opinion at another office for your dental needs. If you do not intend to get this treatment done, I feel that it is best for you to seek any future dental care elsewhere. You can find another dentist through your insurance plan, the internet, or from the California Dental Association.

We will provide emergency dental services for the [insert time period here, e.g., next 30 days]; however, after that point, unless you get this treatment done, we will no longer provide you with regular, routine cleanings.

If you decide to find a new dentist, please send us a signed, written request with the dentist's information, and we will be happy to forward your records to that office at no charge.

We really do not want to lose you as a patient; however, we feel very strongly about our job as your dentist, and if your philosophy and ours are not in line, then we feel it is best for both parties to have you find a dentist that you do align with.

Please call if you have any questions about your dental health, if you would like to discuss this treatment further, or have your new dentist call if he/she needs additional information.

Thank you for your understanding, and we wish you all the best in your continued dental care.

Patient Wanting To Be Seen Between Two Offices

Subject: Transition of Dental Care

Dear [Patient Name],

I hope this letter finds you well. I recently learned from my staff about your intent to receive treatment elsewhere, while also hoping to continue your cleanings at our office. I understand that your decision is based on insurance considerations, but I must express my concerns about managing your dental health between different offices.

Our practice is committed to providing comprehensive and consistent care, and I believe that dividing your treatment between multiple providers may hinder our ability to ensure the best outcomes for your dental health. It's important to have a clear and cohesive approach to your care, and I believe that working with multiple offices may lead to complications.

I will be happy to forward your records to the new office of your choice. While we really do not want to lose you as a patient, we feel very strongly about our job as your dentist. If your philosophy and ours are not in line, then we feel it is best for both parties to have you find a dentist that you do align with.



Please call if you have any questions about your dental health, if you would like to discuss this treatment further, or if your new dentist needs additional information. I want to thank you for entrusting us with your dental care, and I wish you the best with your future dental treatments.