Reducing No-Show Appointments in Pediatric Patients

Missed appointments have a significant impact on a practice’s productivity, revenue and operational efficiency. When a patient does not show up for a scheduled appointment, they take away time that a provider could have with another patient. Although no-shows cannot be eliminated entirely, it is important for patients to know the value of appointments, for staff to be aware of the no-show policy and for a practice to know why patients no-showed to an appointment. Here are tips on how to reduce no-shows:

R Reschedule appointments if a parent knows they cannot make it to a visit.
E Educate patients about the benefits of completed appointments. Provide information about scheduling, canceling and rescheduling appointments.
D Document reasons patients did not show up for appointment.
U Update patient contact information at every visit.
C Collaborate with community organizations to assist families with transportation, food banks and shelters.
E Encourage all staff to reinforce the importance of attending all scheduled visits.

N Notify patients about appointments by using reminder techniques such as phone calls, patient portal messages, letters, postcards and appointment cards. Include a method for patients to reschedule appointments.
O Opt-out scripting when offering a new appointment (Instead of asking, “Would you like to schedule your child’s well-care visit?” say, “We are calling to schedule your child’s well-care visit. Our next available appointment is ______.”)
S Study EMR reports that track no-show rates. If EMR reporting is unavailable, manually track no-show appointment data (pre- and post- interventions)
H Help families and patients overcome barriers that may prevent them from coming to appointments by using social determinants of health screening tool.
O Operationalize the process for following up with patients who did not show up for their appointment.
W Walk-in slots: Consider allowing a specific number of patients to use walk-in slots to accommodate frequent no-show patients.
S Schedule same-day appointments to accommodate patients who frequently no-show or go to the urgent care or emergency department.