

Medical appointments policy template

There's no general legal right to time off for routine medical or dental appointments - so your policy is the rule. That makes writing one down more important, not less: without it, managers improvise, people get different answers, and the inconsistency is where discrimination claims start. The template below covers the four statutory exceptions and the everyday approach.

The template

Copy from here to the end of section 7 and replace each [bracketed placeholder].

1. Purpose

This policy explains how [Company name] handles time off for medical, dental and related appointments. We'd rather people looked after their health than worked around it, and this policy is meant to make that straightforward and consistent for everyone.

2. Who it covers

All employees and workers, from their first day. It covers appointments with GPs, dentists, opticians, hospitals and specialists, and related treatment such as physiotherapy or counselling.

3. Our general approach

Wherever possible, please book routine appointments at the start or end of your working day, or on a non-working day if you work part-time. Where that isn't possible - and often it isn't - we offer [choose one: paid time off for the appointment, up to [X hours] per appointment / unpaid time off / the option to make the time up within the same week, by agreement with your manager]. Tell your manager as soon as you know about the appointment. We don't need to know what it's for.

4. Appointments that are treated differently by law

- Antenatal care. Pregnant employees have a statutory right to paid time off for antenatal appointments, including classes recommended by a midwife or doctor.
- Accompanying a partner to antenatal care. A statutory right to unpaid time off for up to two appointments, of up to 6.5 hours each.
- Disability-related appointments. Where an appointment relates to a disability, allowing the time off - paid or with flexibility to make it up - may be a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010. We will consider each case individually and will not count such absences against attendance triggers.
- Emergencies involving a dependant. Statutory unpaid time off for dependants covers emergencies - a child taken ill, a care arrangement breaking down - not routine appointments that were planned in advance.

5. Ongoing or frequent treatment

Some conditions need regular appointments over months - cancer treatment, fertility treatment, dialysis, mental health support. If that's you, please talk to [your manager / HR] so we can agree a pattern that works rather than handling each appointment as a separate request. Where the underlying condition is a disability, we'll consider reasonable adjustments. Anything you tell us is treated confidentially.

6. Evidence

We don't routinely ask for proof of appointments. If a pattern is causing operational difficulty, your manager may ask to see an appointment card or letter - and will explain why they're asking. [For antenatal appointments after the first, an employer is entitled to ask to see the appointment card and a certificate confirming the pregnancy.]

7. Recording

Appointment time is recorded as [appointment leave / paid time off] on your record. It is not recorded as sickness absence and does not count towards attendance or absence triggers.

How to adapt the policy

- Pick one approach in section 3 and say it plainly. The commonest failure isn't being ungenerous - it's leaving it vague so different managers land in different places.
- Don't record appointments as sickness. It's inaccurate, it inflates absence statistics, and it drags people towards absence triggers for having a filling replaced.
- Watch the disability line carefully. Counting disability-related appointment absence against attendance is a discrimination risk - see what must be excluded from absence scoring.
- Be generous with the small stuff. An hour for a dental appointment costs you an hour. Making someone take a whole day's holiday for it costs you their goodwill.

A free template from CoDash - codash.co.uk/templates. Edit it to match how your company actually works, and take advice on anything unusual.