

Walk-in Clinics Checklist

Includes:

- ✓ Supporting the relationship between episodic and primary care
- ✓ Maintaining standards of practice

About this Checklist

The OMA has developed a series of checklists to help you understand and implement the CPSO's *Continuity of Care* policies.

This checklist organizes the expectations set out in the *Walk-in Clinics* policy into common themes. It lists key action items followed by the exact wording from the policy. It also includes optional guidance from the CPSO's *Continuity of Care: Advice to the Profession* document.

This checklist is not intended as a substitute for reading the CPSO *Continuity of Care* policies in full.

Supporting the Relationship Between Episodic Care and Primary Care

Explain the nature of episodic care to your patients

- Physicians practising in a walk-in clinic **must** use their professional judgement to determine whether it would be appropriate to sensitively remind patients:
 - a) That there are differences between episodic care and care that is provided as part of a sustained physician-patient relationship;
 - b) About the benefits of seeing their primary care provider, if they have one, for care within their physician's scope of practice; and/or
 - c) About the benefits of having a primary care provider and encouraging them to seek one out, if they don't already have one. (*Walk-in Clinics*, 1)
- Physicians practising in a walk-in clinic who limit the care or services they provide due to the episodic nature of walk-in clinic care **must**:
 - a) Make decisions to limit the services they provide due to the episodic nature of walk-in clinic care in good faith;
 - b) Communicate any limitations to patients in a clear and straightforward manner; and
 - c) Communicate appropriate next steps to patients seeking care or services that are not provided, considering factors such as the urgency of the patient's needs and whether other health-care providers are involved in the patient's care. (*Walk-in Clinics*, 4)

Assist patients who wish to find a primary care provider

- Physicians practising in a walk-in clinic who are asked for assistance in finding a primary care provider **must** be as helpful as possible in supporting the patient. (*Walk-in Clinics, 2*)

NOTE: Examples include directing patients to a colleague who is accepting new patients or to an organization that may be able to assist, such as a Community Health Centre, a local hospital or emergency room, or other organization. The CPSO’s Physician and Public Advisory Service (PPAS) may also be able to provide some general tips and advice to patients seeking a new provider. Call PPAS toll-free at 1-800-268-70-96 ext. 603.



Additional Advice to the Profession from the CPSO

The *Walk-in Clinics* policy does not set out expectations for providing care to patients who do not have a primary care provider.

Some patients have difficulty finding a primary care provider and regularly visit the same walk-in clinic for care. It can be beneficial to offer additional care beyond the usual walk-in clinic experience to these patients if possible.

Examples of additional care could include working with the other physicians in the practice to:

- monitor and manage basic elements of a chronic condition, and/or
- offer preventative care visits.

Provide a record of the patient encounter to the patient’s primary care provider if i) the patient requests you to or, ii) it is warranted from a patient safety perspective and the patient consents

- Physicians practising in a walk-in clinic **must** provide the patient’s primary care provider (if there is one) with a record of the encounter when:
 - The patient makes a request to do so; or
 - In their opinion, one is warranted from a patient safety perspective and the patient has provided consent to do so. (*Walk-in Clinics, 8*)
- If it is not possible to send the record of the encounter directly to the patient’s primary care provider (e.g., where there is uncertainty regarding their identity or incomplete contact information), physicians practising in a walk-in clinic **must** provide the patient with the record of the encounter and inform them of the importance of sharing it with their primary care provider. (*Walk-in Clinics, 9*)



Additional Advice to the Profession from the CPSO

The *Walk-in Clinics* policy requires you to send a record of the patient encounter to the patient’s primary care provider if i) the patient requests you to, or ii) it is warranted from a patient safety perspective and the patient consents.

You are also free to consider whether there are other instances where providing a record of the patient encounter to the patient’s primary care physician (with the patient’s consent) would be beneficial.

Maintaining Standards of Practice

Deliver patient care that meets the standard of practice for the profession

- Physicians practising in a walk-in clinic **must** meet the standard of practice of the profession, which applies regardless of whether care is being provided in a sustained or episodic manner. For example, physicians practising in a walk-in clinic must conduct any assessments, tests, or investigations that are required in order for them to appropriately provide treatment and must provide or arrange for appropriate follow-up care. (*Walk-in Clinics*, 3 a)
- Physicians practising in a walk-in clinic who limit the care or services they provide due to the episodic nature of walk-in clinic care **must**:
 - a) Make decisions to limit the services they provide due to the episodic nature of walk-in clinic care in good faith;
 - b) Communicate any limitations to patients in a clear and straightforward manner; and
 - c) Communicate appropriate next steps to patients seeking care or services that are not provided, considering factors such as the urgency of the patient’s needs and whether other health-care providers are involved in the patient’s care. (*Walk-in Clinics*, 4)

Provide or arrange for appropriate follow-up care when ordering tests and making referrals. Do not presume this will be done by the patient’s primary or other health-care providers.

- Physicians practising in a walk-in clinic **must** not rely on the patient’s primary care provider or another health-care provider involved in the patient’s care to provide or coordinate appropriate follow-up for tests they have ordered or referrals they have made, unless the other providers have agreed to assume this responsibility. (*Walk-in Clinics*, 7)
- Physicians practising in a walk-in clinic who make referrals **must** provide or arrange for the provision of necessary follow-up care, including reviewing consultation reports. (*Walk-in Clinics*, 6)
- Physicians practising within a walk-in clinic who order tests **must**:
 - a) Comply with the expectations set out in the Managing Tests policy, including providing appropriate follow-up on test results; and
 - b) Comply with relevant expectations set out in the Availability and Coverage policy, in particular those relating to coordinating coverage for critical test results. (*Walk-in Clinics*, 5)



Additional Advice to the Profession from the CPSO

It’s good practice to copy the patient’s primary care provider on the test requisition form.

Although you can assume you have consent to share this information with the patient’s primary care provider under PHIPA 2004, it’s good practice to get express consent from the patient. There are many reasons why a patient may not want this information shared with their primary care provider.

The information provided in this resource is for informational purposes only and is not to be construed as legal advice. Physicians are ultimately governed by the CPSO policies which can be found at: <https://www.cpso.on.ca/Physicians/Policies-Guidance/Policies>. This resource is not intended as a substitute for reading the CPSO Continuity of Care policies in full.

Walk-in Clinics Checklist Summary

About this Checklist

This checklist contains a summary of the expectations set out in the CPSO's *Walk-in Clinics* policy. It is not intended as a substitute for reading the policy in full.

Supporting the Relationship Between Episodic Care and Primary Care

- Explain the nature of episodic care to your patients
- Assist patients who wish to find a primary care provider
- Provide a record of the patient encounter to the patient's primary care provider if i) the patient requests you to or, ii) it is warranted from a patient safety perspective and the patient consents

Maintaining Standards of Practice

- Deliver patient care that meets the standard of practice for the profession
- Provide or arrange for appropriate follow-up care when ordering tests and making referrals. Do not presume this will be done by the patient's primary or other health-care providers.