

CHANGE PACKAGE

How to implement a patient portal

What is a patient portal?

A patient portal is a secure online facility that allows patients with internet connection to access their health information at any time and from anywhere. Patients can use a portal to:

- make appointments
- order prescriptions
- access test results
- view health information such as recalls, allergies and immunisations
- see consult notes

The practice has the ability to choose which of these services or information they want to make available to patients.

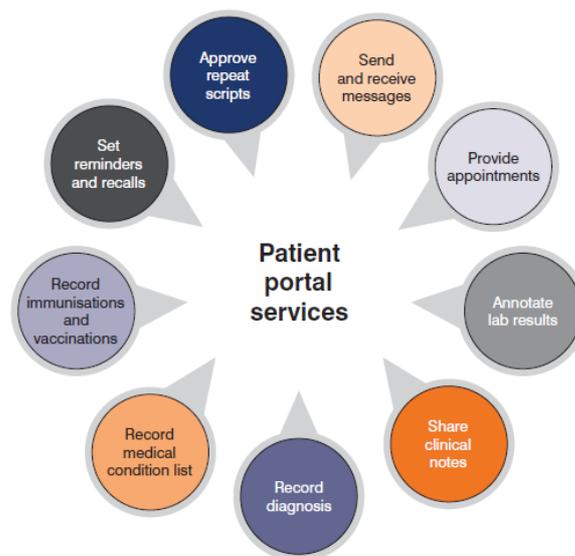


Diagram from Patient Portals – Practical guidelines for implementation, the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners and National Health IT Board

Why should we implement a patient portal?

Once the system is in use and about 40% of registered patients sign up, patient portals free up receptionists', GPs' and nurses' time, make prescriptions easier and reduce multiple handling of test results, increasing efficiency for the practice. Practices have reported a call free reception and less stress on staff.

What are the benefits?

- Frees up receptionists', GPs' and nurses' time as telephone traffic decreases
- Easier prescriptions
- Reduces multiple handling of test results
- Increases efficiency
- Better staff satisfaction

Who does what?

Staff	Role
Receptionists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Let patients know about the portal and encourage sign up Sign up patients for the portal in waiting room and provide any assistance with using the system Check all online appointments every morning and assess if there is a need to ring the patient
General practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Let patients know about the portal and encourage sign up Sign off test results Approve consult notes for uploading to the portal
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decide on which portal they wish to use Contract portal provider Organise training on how to use the portal
Practice nurses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Let patients know about the portal and encourage sign up
PHO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support practice in choosing a portal

When should we use it?

Patients and practices can access the portal 24/7.

How will it affect staffing?

Initially, staff will need to be trained on the use of the portal. You will need all staff to drive registrations, track number of enrolled patients and make sure targets are met.

Will we need additional resources?

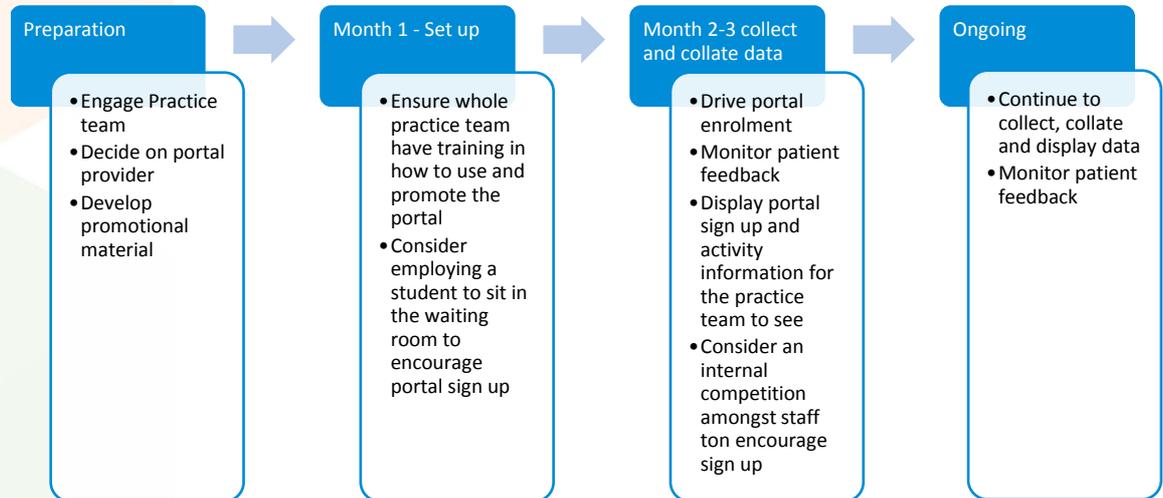
Yes. You will need to contract the services of a portal provider. If possible, make tablets available to receptionists so that they can sign patients up in the waiting room, which can considerably increase the uptake. Some practices have had success by having students in their waiting rooms during school and university holidays showing patients how to use the portal, and signing them up.

How can we promote it to our patients?

There are various channels you can use to raise patient awareness about patient portals and get them to sign up:

- Display posters in prominent areas at your practice (featuring for example a step by step on how to sign up)
- Make authority forms (for patients to provide their details and sign) available near posters.
- Change the telephone message to redirect patients to the portal
- Photocopy promotional information onto the back of invoices and statements
- Put instructions for ordering prescriptions online on the back of prescriptions
- Encourage reception and clinical staff to talk to patients about the portal
- Consider having an internal practice competition with a small prize (e.g movie tickets) for the staff member that signs up the most patients over a designated timeframe
- Provide information about the service and benefits on your website and social media channels
- Provide staff with tablets so that they can sign patients up for the portal in the waiting room
- Consider marketing the portal by having all staff wear portal sign up t-shirts on certain days of the week

What is the implementation timeline?



What should we measure?

Reports provided by the portal vendors will enable you to track:

- Number of enrolled patients
- Number of repeat prescriptions
- Number of test results viewed
- Number of appointment booked

What else do we need to know?

- Due to privacy reasons, under 16-year-old patients can't sign up. However, their health information can be seen in their parents' portal.
- It is recommended that you restrict sign up to registered patients only.
- Online appointments are for 15 minute regular consultations only. If the patient needs more time, a message needs to be included in your portal to advise them to book two appointments.