

Cancellation, Non-Attendance and Appointment Changes Policy

Purpose

Ocean Physiotherapy reserves appointment and group session times specifically for each client. Providing adequate notice when an appointment cannot be attended allows us to offer that time to another person, maintain access to services for other clients, and use clinician and travel time responsibly.

We recognise that illness, emergencies and unexpected circumstances occur. This policy aims to balance reasonable flexibility for clients with respect for the time of clients and clinicians, the resources committed to each appointment, and the need to keep services available to other people who may require them.

1. Cancellation Notice

Ocean Physiotherapy generally requires clients to provide **at least 48 hours' notice** if they need to cancel or reschedule a booked service. This generally applies to:

- clinic appointments;
- home visits;
- telehealth appointments;
- retirement village or visiting-clinic appointments;
- hydrotherapy, gym and other group sessions; and
- other individually reserved services.

Where a funding arrangement, service agreement or applicable program specifies a different cancellation period or charging requirement, those requirements may apply instead.

2. Late Cancellations

Where an appointment is cancelled or rescheduled with **less than 48 hours' notice**, the client may incur **up to the full fee for the service that was booked**.

For services involving planned travel, including home visits and other off-site appointments, the amount charged may also include **applicable planned travel time, travel fees or other costs reasonably committed to the appointment**, where applicable and permitted under the relevant funding or service arrangement. Factors that may be considered when deciding whether to charge, reduce or waive a cancellation fee include:

- the amount of notice provided;
- the reason for cancellation;
- whether the circumstances could reasonably have been anticipated;
- whether the appointment can be offered to another client;
- whether clinician, travel or other resources have already been committed;
- the client's previous attendance and cancellation history; and
- the requirements of any applicable funding program or service agreement.

Cancellation fees may therefore be reduced or waived where reasonable at the discretion of Ocean Physiotherapy and our clinicians.



3. Non-Attendance

Where a client does not attend a scheduled appointment and has not provided adequate notice, the **full applicable booked fee may be charged**. For a home or community visit, this may include circumstances where a clinician:

- travels to the agreed location;
- is available and prepared to provide the scheduled service; but
- is unable to provide the service because the client is not present, cannot be contacted or reasonable access cannot be obtained.

Applicable travel charges may also be incurred where applicable and permitted.

4. Client Delays and Readiness for Service

Clients are asked to be available and reasonably ready for their service at the scheduled appointment time. Where a client is delayed, unavailable or not ready to commence the service at the scheduled time, the appointment may still proceed within the **remaining booked appointment time**. This may reduce the time available for assessment, treatment, exercise, education or other planned components of the service. A client delay **does not automatically extend the booked appointment or result in a higher fee**. Where the available service time is reduced because of a client delay, the **original booked appointment fee may still apply**, reflecting the clinician time and appointment capacity that was reserved for the client.

Where additional clinician time is required because of the delay, the appointment may only be extended where this is reasonably possible and the clinician agrees to the extension. Where an appointment is extended beyond the originally booked period because of a client delay, an additional fee may apply to reflect the additional clinician time provided. Any additional fee should be discussed with the client where practicable and will only apply where reasonable and permitted under the relevant funding or service arrangement. Where the client does not wish to proceed with a longer appointment, or the clinician is unable to extend the appointment because of subsequent bookings, travel or other commitments, the service will ordinarily remain limited to the time available within the original booking. **The original booked appointment fee may still be charged.**

Where a client delay is substantial enough that the clinician can no longer reasonably provide the planned service, or where the remaining appointment time is insufficient to safely or meaningfully provide the service, the appointment may be treated as a **late cancellation or non-attendance** and the applicable cancellation fee may apply. Examples may include circumstances where:

- the client is not present or cannot be contacted at the scheduled time;
- reasonable access to the client or premises is delayed;
- the client is not reasonably ready to participate and the delay materially affects the booked service;
- essential equipment, support or preparation required for the appointment is not available; or
- the remaining appointment time is insufficient to safely or meaningfully provide the planned service.

Ocean Physiotherapy will use reasonable judgement in these circumstances and will consider the extent of the delay, whether any meaningful service was provided, any additional clinician or travel time incurred, and the requirements of the applicable funding arrangement.

5. Illness, Emergencies and Unexpected Circumstances

Clients should not attend an appointment where doing so would be unsafe or clinically inappropriate, including where they are acutely unwell or potentially infectious. Ocean Physiotherapy may waive or reduce a cancellation fee where there are reasonable grounds for a late cancellation or non-attendance, such as:

- hospitalisation;
- an unexpected health event;
- an emergency;
- bereavement;
- an unexpected change in essential care or support arrangements; or
- another significant circumstance outside the person's reasonable control.

Circumstances will be considered individually. We do not expect a client to attend an appointment simply to avoid a cancellation fee where attendance would be unsafe or inappropriate.

6. Group Sessions, Prepaid Passes and Recurring Bookings

The same **48-hour cancellation period** ordinarily applies to booked group sessions unless another funding or service arrangement applies. Where insufficient notice is provided, the session may:

- be charged at the usual session fee; or
- be deducted from a prepaid pass, package or other session entitlement.

A group session missed without adequate notice will ordinarily be charged or deducted.

Where a cancelled place can reasonably be filled by another participant, Ocean Physiotherapy may waive the cancellation charge or reinstate the relevant session credit.

Repeated late cancellation or non-attendance may result in a recurring group place no longer being reserved.

7. Changes or Cancellations by Ocean Physiotherapy

Occasionally Ocean Physiotherapy may need to change or cancel an appointment because of clinician illness, unexpected operational circumstances, travel disruption, emergencies or other circumstances affecting service delivery.

Where **Ocean Physiotherapy cancels a service and no service is provided**, the client will not ordinarily be charged. Where payment arrangements are already in place:

- a direct debit will not be processed where reasonably practicable;
- where a direct debit or other payment has already been processed, the amount will be offered as a **credit toward a future service or refunded**, according to the client's preference and any applicable funding requirements;
- a prepaid pass, package or session entitlement will not be forfeited; and
- any session credit already deducted will be reinstated.

Reasonable Alternative Arrangements

There may be circumstances where Ocean Physiotherapy does not cancel the service but needs to make a reasonable change to the planned arrangements. For example, we may offer:

- another suitably qualified clinician;
- a reasonable change in appointment time;
- an alternative appointment on the same or another appropriate day;
- an appropriate alternative service location; or
- another reasonable means of providing the agreed service.

Where the original arrangement cannot proceed but a reasonable alternative is offered, Ocean Physiotherapy will discuss the available options with the client.

Declining an alternative offered by Ocean Physiotherapy will not automatically result in a cancellation fee. However, where the agreed service remains reasonably available and a reasonable alternative arrangement has been offered, a client who elects not to receive the service may in some circumstances be treated as having cancelled the appointment, where this is:

- reasonable in the circumstances;
- consistent with the client's service agreement;
- clearly communicated in advance; and
- permitted under the relevant funding, contractual or program requirements.

This provision is particularly relevant to ongoing or funded services where continuity of support may require reasonable flexibility regarding clinician, timing, location or other service arrangements.

8. Clinician Delays

The nature of physiotherapy, home visiting and community-based healthcare means that unexpected delays can occasionally occur. A preceding client may require additional clinical assistance, an urgent matter may arise, travel conditions may change unexpectedly, or circumstances outside the clinician's reasonable control may affect the scheduled start time. Ocean Physiotherapy aims to commence appointments as close as reasonably possible to their scheduled time. Clients should be aware that **delays of up to approximately 15 minutes may occasionally occur without advance warning.** Where practicable, we will contact the client when we become aware that a significant delay is likely.

Delays Greater Than 30 Minutes

Where Ocean Physiotherapy expects the clinician to commence the appointment **more than 30 minutes after the scheduled appointment time**, the client may be offered the choice to:

- proceed with the appointment at the later time;
- reschedule the appointment; or
- cancel the appointment.

Where the client chooses not to proceed because the clinician is delayed by more than 30 minutes, **no cancellation fee will apply.** Where the client chooses to proceed, Ocean Physiotherapy will endeavour to provide the booked service without unreasonably reducing the planned consultation time.

9. Repeated Cancellation or Non-Attendance

Where late cancellations, non-attendance or difficulties being available for scheduled services occur repeatedly, Ocean Physiotherapy may discuss alternative arrangements with the client.

These may include:

- changing the usual appointment day or time;
- reducing the frequency of recurring bookings;
- booking appointments closer to the required date;
- requiring confirmation before an appointment is reserved;
- requiring prepayment or direct debit;
- removing a standing group place; or
- discontinuing recurring appointment reservations.

The purpose of these arrangements is not punitive. They are intended to support reliable engagement while ensuring limited appointment capacity remains available to other clients.

10. Funded and Third-Party Services

Services funded through programs such as **Support at Home, the NDIS, compensable schemes or other third-party arrangements** are subject to the applicable legislation, program rules, pricing arrangements and service agreement. Ocean Physiotherapy will only claim or charge cancellation, non-attendance, travel or related fees where permitted.

Where the applicable funding program specifies a different cancellation period or charging rule, **the requirements of that program take precedence over Ocean Physiotherapy's general 48-hour policy.**

Where a funding program, insurer, or other third-party payer does not fund or reimburse for a cancellation, non-attendance, or related fee, this **does not automatically mean that the fee is waived.** Where permitted by the law and applicable funding arrangement, Ocean Physiotherapy may charge the applicable fee directly to the client where:

- the client has been clearly informed in advance that they may be personally responsible for such fees;
- this responsibility is included in, or otherwise consistent with, the applicable service agreement and terms of service;
- the fee is reasonable and consistent with this policy; and
- the relevant funding program does not prohibit the client being charged personally.

Where a funding program specifically prohibits a provider from charging the client or participant for that type of fee, Ocean Physiotherapy will comply with that requirement.

Any personally payable cancellation fee will be distinguished from a funded clinical service, and will not be presented as though the cancelled service was delivered.

11. Medicare, Private Health Insurance and Other Rebates

A cancellation fee represents clinician time, appointment capacity and other resources reserved for a service that was not delivered. Cancellation fees will therefore generally **not be submitted as a completed physiotherapy consultation for Medicare, private health insurance or another payer where an eligible clinical service has not been provided.**

12. Providing Notice

Clients should contact Ocean Physiotherapy as soon as they become aware that they cannot attend. Notice may be provided using the communication methods advised by Ocean Physiotherapy, including:

- telephone;
- voicemail;
- SMS; or
- another approved communication channel.

The time the cancellation or rescheduling request is received or recorded by our communication system will generally be used when determining the applicable notice period.

Clients do not need to wait for a staff member to personally answer or reply to be considered as providing notice.

13. Our Approach

Ocean Physiotherapy will endeavour to apply this policy **fairly, reasonably and consistently**. Cancellation charges are not intended as a punishment. They recognise that an appointment reserves clinician time and, in some cases, travel and other resources specifically for that client, while also preventing that appointment from being made available to another person. Reasonable discretion may be exercised where circumstances warrant it, subject to any applicable funding, contractual or regulatory requirements.