

Layout checklist

Waiting area

- The area is safe for all of your patients, including young children, the elderly and the disabled. Watch out for tricky or unmarked steps, or dangerous or small objects that could harm a child.
- The space is large enough to accommodate at least the usual number of waiting patients.
- The space is large enough to accommodate patients using a wheelchair, walking device or pram without obstructing walkways.
- The ambient temperature is constant and comfortable and the decor soothing (e.g. soft lighting, relaxing colours).
- Play background music or have a television. These serve as entertainment, as well as a masking sound to help protect confidential discussions.
- Lay industrial-strength floor covering that will stand up to traffic and regular cleaning.
- Carpet is ideal as it helps to absorb noise.
- Provide a separate waiting area for certain patients (e.g. distressed or infectious).
- The doorways and corridors are wide enough to allow wheelchairs to pass freely without obstruction or difficulty.
- The toilet facilities are fitted with hand rails and an emergency button for patients with disabilities.
- Include hand washing/hand hygiene facilities, including diagrams, are available for all patients and visitors

Reception area

- Workstations adhere to Work Health and Safety guidelines.
- An appropriate number of electrical outlets are available. Ensure these are safely positioned to minimise the risk of overloading power points or tripping over cords.
- The position of the reception desk encourages patients to come to this area on arrival and prior to leaving.

Steps are taken to protect patient confidentiality by:

- restricting public access and making sure the reception desk prevents visitors from viewing confidential information. The height of the desk will help with this.
- avoiding the likelihood of waiting patients overhearing conversations between other patients and staff, whether on the phone or at the reception desk. For example, have a phone away from the front desk for receptionists to use when calling patients about results.
- Receptionists have ample room to perform their duties and plenty of storage space for the multitude of office supplies.
- Appropriate space for secure information storage is available. Information must be secure at all times, including after hours when the cleaner may be the only person in the practice. You should work towards managing electronic records only. This is safer than paper-based records, if done properly.
- There are at least two exits for doctors and practice staff in case an abusive or potentially dangerous patient tries to block them from leaving.

Consulting rooms

- You will need to consider where you want your patient positioned during a consultation. You may wish to have them sitting across from you with your desk in between or maybe to the side of your desk. You may want to have easy access to the door or an alternative exit in the event that a patient becomes violent or threatening. It is recommended in the RACGP standards that practitioners do not have a desk blocking their access to the exit.
- Have constant and comfortable ambient temperature, remembering patients may be required to undress while in the consulting room.

Layout checklist

Consulting rooms (cont.)

- There is adequate lighting.
- There is visual and auditory privacy free of extraneous noise.
- The computer set-up adheres to the Work Health and Safety guidelines.
- Include hand-washing facilities in the room.
- Provide a private area for patients to undress (e.g. behind screen/curtain).
- The doorways and corridors are wide enough to allow wheelchairs to pass freely without obstruction or difficulty.
- There are at least two exits for doctors and practice staff in case an abusive or potentially dangerous patient tries to block them from leaving.
- There is an exit for the practitioner that is not via the waiting room.

Procedure and treatment rooms

- These should be separate from the consulting rooms.
- Surfaces should be easy to clean (e.g. stainless steel, linoleum/parquet, laminate, etc., and comply with general infection control guidelines).
- Examination lighting and equipment should always be in good working condition and appropriate for use.
- Medical consumables should be continually re-stocked and readily available.
- All drugs should be kept in a locked cupboard.
- Sharps containers should be out of the reach of children, and arrangements made for regular replacing.
- There should be a dedicated sink for hand-washing.
- The doorways and corridors are wide enough to allow wheelchairs to pass freely without obstruction or difficulty.
- There are at least two exits for doctors and practice staff in case an abusive or potentially dangerous patient tries to block them from leaving.

Links between different practice areas

- Have corridors wide enough to accommodate two-way traffic, including wheelchairs and ambulance trolleys.
- Line corridors with durable paintwork and industrial-strength floor covering.
- Consider installing chair rails in corridors. While you may not have chairs in corridors, it's surprising how many prams knock the walls.
- Encourage smooth flow of traffic through surgery.
- Have a layout that will encourage patients to go directly to the reception desk on arrival at the surgery and again when leaving the surgery. This can be done by ensuring the desk is in the path of the front door to the consulting room.
- Ramp access into the building and between areas of the practice is available for patients using wheelchairs or walking devices.