

SMS reduction advice for GP practices

How to keep SMS costs down in your GP Practice

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Monitor your usage

1. **Understand fragments**. Accrux provides a certain number of SMS fragments as part of our contract, then we pay for any SMS fragments sent on top of that.
2. **Keep an eye on your Accrux dashboard** so you know how many SMS Fragments you have left. This is currently around 7 for every patient on your list.
3. **Know how many characters make up a fragment:**
 - 160 characters = 1 fragment (or 1 text)
 - 306 characters = 2 fragments (or 2 texts)
 - 459 characters =3 (or 3 texts)
 - 612 characters =4 fragments (or 4 texts)
4. **Keep an eye out for email alerts from Firetext.** These are sent when you have 50,000, 25,000, 10,000, 5,000 and 0 fragments left.
5. **Review the undelivered feature within AccuRx** to check patient phone numbers are up to date. Delete numbers that are no longer in use.

Encourage your patients

1. **To provide email an address** if you don't have one on file.
2. **To download the NHS App** and turn ON the notification setting for the app. If a message is not read within the NHS App it will revert to being sent as an SMS text after 24 hours.

Suggestions

1. **Keep all messages concise.** The Accurx app tells you how many characters a text is. You can also use Word or an online character counter (<https://charactercounter.com/sms>) to create message templates for different messages and ensure they are under fragment limits. Example below.

2. **Know who is sending SMS messages** in your practice so they know to use any templates.
3. **Limit the number of confirmation and reminder texts for appointments.** One confirmation or reminder text is enough and ensure they are under 160 characters.
4. **Use online tools to make web links shorter:** [Bitly](#) or [Tiny](#)
5. **Longer texts can be sent as a word attachment** instead.
6. **Plan for any campaigns.** Where you have a patient's email address or they have the NHS app, use this when you send batch messages. If this is part of work with an ICB project team, see if they can pay.
7. **Don't email all patients unless you have to.** If you have a message that is only relevant to over 50s for example, only select patients in this age group.

Resources

1. Contact your Senior GP IT Facilitator on xx
2. How to [send an Accurx message as an email](#)
3. How to [batch message using emails](#)
4. [Video](#) of SMS reduction workshop by Accurx
5. Direct debit [blank mandate form](#). Send it by email to: finance@accurx.com
6. How to be more efficient with fragments [article](#)
7. [NHS App messaging](#)
8. [FAQs](#)

Example appointment reminder

Before: (243 characters/2 fragments)

Dear x,

This is a reminder of your appointment which is booked for 23-Mar-2024 at 9:50am at NORTH EAST LONDON GP PRACTICE.

If you need to cancel, please follow this link: <https://accurx.nhs.uk/123456789>

Thanks,

North East London GP practice

After: (142 characters/1 fragment)

Dear x,

Appointment reminder: 23-Mar-2024 at 9:50am at NORTH EAST LONDON GP PRACTICE. Cancel at this link: <https://accurx.nhs.uk/123456789>