

# Episodic Care: Standards for Nurse Practitioners

*(Not in effect until approved)*

## Purpose

This standard ensures that nurse practitioners (NPs) provide comprehensive **episodic care** by clearly explaining the scope and limitations of care to patients. NPs must communicate effectively with patients regarding the importance of diagnostic tests, the results process and next steps in care. Additionally, NPs must manage follow-up care, including ensuring after-hours coverage and maintaining clear communication with other health-care providers involved in the patient's care. Documentation of encounter details, diagnostic tests and any transfer of care must be handled in a timely and organized manner.

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## Criteria

To meet this standard, NPs must:

1. Clearly explain the scope of care to the patient, including any examinations and procedures.
  2. Ensure the patient understands the limitations of episodic care, emphasizing that it is focused on addressing their immediate concern. This must be communicated verbally, with additional information provided through handouts, clinic postings or electronically.
  3. Explain the importance of completing any required diagnostic tests and indicate where the results will be sent.
  4. Outline the next steps in care, specifying who the patient should follow up with for further care.
  5. Provide the patient's **primary care provider** with an encounter record if it is in the patient's best interest, unless the patient requests otherwise.
  6. Manage follow-up care, including diagnostic tests and consultation reports, until another provider formally assumes care or the acute issue is resolved, including:
    - 6.1. Ensure that after-hours care is available to the patient, as required for the episodic care provided.
    - 6.2. If multiple providers are involved in the patient's care, there must be a clear and documented process for follow-up.
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- 6.3.** When copying another provider on a diagnostic test or specialist referral, the ordering NP is responsible for follow-up unless otherwise agreed.
- 6.4.** Any transfer of care must be documented in the patient's record, as the ordering NP remains responsible unless a formal system is in place to transfer responsibility.

## Glossary

**EPISODIC CARE** – Care focused on a specific health concern or condition, which may involve multiple steps such as diagnostic tests, follow-up appointments and specialist referrals. While the NP provides the necessary care to address the immediate issue, there is no expectation of an ongoing, long-term care relationship.

**PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER** – An NP or physician who establishes a long-term, ongoing relationship with a patient, managing their overall health and coordinating care across various health needs over time.

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