

# What to Do if You Get a Complaint

## 1 Don't panic

- Chances are you will get a complaint at some point in your career
- Your professional obligation is to respond promptly and respectfully

## 2 Respond to the College about the complaint

- Provide a detailed written report addressing each of the concerns raised
- For complaints about treatment of a patient, include all patient records, charts and radiographs
- If records are electronic, put on disc or email to CDSBC – don't print digital radiographs onto regular paper; they are not diagnostic

## 3 Take a breath and then review the complaint and your response with a trusted colleague (24-hour rule)

- Minimize emotionalism: be factual, dispassionate, and thorough
- Don't blame or be disrespectful of the patient – think about them reading your response
- You are the one with professional responsibilities, not the patient, no matter how difficult they may be
- Be judicious in your response– the patient will get a copy if they seek a review from the Health Professions Review Board, or make a Freedom of Information request
- If there are other witnesses to an event complained of, have them prepare a dispassionate, factual account and include it with your report

## 4 Don't be afraid to contact the patient/complainant to apologize or see if you can resolve the concerns directly

- If you weren't aware of the problem until you got the complaint, this is your chance to deal with the complainant to address the concern
- If appropriate:
  - apologize – if only for the fact there was a negative experience in your office
  - advise of steps that you will take to address concerns to ensure it doesn't happen again
  - offer to refer for second opinion, fix, refund money, etc.

## 5 Reflect on what you can learn from the complaint

## 6 If there is a claim against you, notify your insurer