

How this all got started....

In 2005, a hospital in Pennsylvania submitted a report to the Pennsylvania Patient Safety Reporting System (PA-PSRS) describing an event in which clinicians nearly failed to rescue a patient who had a cardiopulmonary arrest because the patient had been incorrectly designated as "DNR" (do not resuscitate). The source of the confusion was that a nurse had incorrectly placed a yellow wristband on the patient. In this hospital, the color yellow signified that the patient should not be resuscitated. In a nearby hospital, in which this nurse also worked, yellow signified "restricted extremity," meaning that this arm is not to be used for drawing blood or obtaining IV access. Fortunately, in this case, another clinician identified the mistake, and the patient was resuscitated. However, this "near miss" highlights a potential source of error and an opportunity to improve patient safety by re-evaluating the use of color-coded wristbands.

We want to thank and acknowledge this hospital for their transparency and disclosure of this event. It could have happened any where, and it has served as a "wake up call" to many of us.

What about Oklahoma?

Oklahoma has a goal of providing safe and high quality care. We accomplish this in several ways, one which includes using the same colors for "alert" wristbands. Most hospitals are adopting the same colors so regardless of which hospital you work at today or tomorrow, the color coded alert wristbands should be the same color for Allergy, the same color for Fall Risk, the same color for Do Not Resuscitate, the same color for Restricted Extremity, and the same color for Latex Allergy.

The National Picture

The Big Picture - This initiative is being adopted by hospitals nationwide. The American Hospital Association has released a policy encouraging nationwide adoption of these standard colors, and most states have adopted all or some of the standard colors or are in the process of standardizing."

RED means ALLERGY ALERT

YELLOW means FALL RISK

PURPLE means "DNR" or Do Not Resuscitate

PINK means RESTRICTED

EXTREMITY

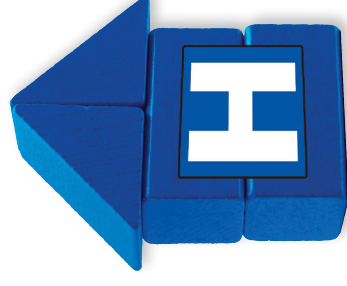
GREEN means LATEX ALLERGY



Staff Education: Regarding:

Color-coded "alert" wristbands

*Information intended for
all staff, clinical
and non-clinical.*



Color-coded Alert Wristbands – A Statewide Patient Safety Initiative

Hospitals in Oklahoma had many different categories of wristbands being used to designate DNR status, Fall Risk and Allergy. With a high nursing turnover rate and a large number of agency and traveling nurses in Oklahoma, the risk for errors was obvious. The solution: standardize the colors being used for Allergies, Fall Risk, DNR, Restricted Extremity and Latex Allergy in all Oklahoma Hospitals. Our answer is this project.

How to tell the patients what the different colors mean?

How we say something is just as important as *what* we say. The next column is a script you can use to tell your patients / families about the color-coded alert wristbands and what they mean. If everyone says it the same, there is a better chance patients and families will understand what we are saying.

SCRIPT

For any staff person talking to a patient or family

What is a Color-coded “Alert” Wristband?

Color-coded alert wristbands are used in hospitals to quickly communicate a certain health care status, condition or an “alert” that a patient may have. This is done so every staff member can provide the best care possible.

What do the colors mean?

There are FIVE different color-coded “alert” wristbands that we are going to discuss because they are going to be standardized throughout the state.

RED means ALLERGY ALERT

If a patient has an allergy to anything - food, medicine, dust, grass, pet hair, ANYTHING - tell us. It may not seem important to you but it could be very important in the care they receive.

YELLOW means FALL RISK

We want to prevent falls at all times. Nurses review patients all the time to determine if they need extra attention in order to prevent a fall. Sometimes, a person may become weakened during their illness or because they just had a surgery. When a patient has this color-coded alert wristband, the nurse is saying this person needs to be assisted when walking or they may fall.

PURPLE means “DNR” or Do Not Resuscitate

Some patients have expressed an end-of-life wish and we want to honor that request.

PINK means RESTRICTED EXTREMITY

When a patient has this color-coded wristband, the nurse is saying this patient’s extremity should be handled with extreme care. Other care providers are alerted to check with the nurse prior to any tests or procedures involving the restricted extremity.

GREEN means LATEX ALLERGY

The best way to prevent an allergic reaction is to avoid latex. This green wristband will alert the doctors, nurses and other health care professionals about your allergy.

Other Risk Reduction Strategies Staff Should Know

Color-coded “Alert” Wristbands / Risk Reduction Strategies

Quick Reference Card

1. Use wristbands with the alert message pre-printed (such as “DNR”).
2. Remove any “social cause” colored wristbands (such as “Live Strong”).
3. Remove wristbands that have been applied from another facility.
4. Initiate banding upon admission, changes in condition, or when information received during hospital stay.
5. Educate patients and family members regarding the wristbands.
6. Coordinate chart/ white board/care plan/door signage information/stickers with same color coding.
7. Educate staff to verify patient color-coded “alert” wristbands upon assessment, hand-off of care and facility transfer communication.