

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 anywhere, and it has served as a “wake up call” to many of us.

*To view the entire report go to http://www.psa.state.pa.us/psa/iib/psa/advisories/v2_s2_sup_advisory_dec_14_2005.pdf

What about Oregon?

Oregon 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” wrist bands. 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, and the same color for Restricted Extremity.

The Big Picture

This initiative is being adopted in Oregon and in all of the southwestern states of the nation. Known as the WRAPS, (Western Region Alliance for Patient Safety), Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah are united in this effort. That means whether you are traveling on vacation to these states or relocated to work in another state, most hospitals in this region of the country will be using the following colors:

RED means ALLERGY ALERT

YELLOW means FALL RISK

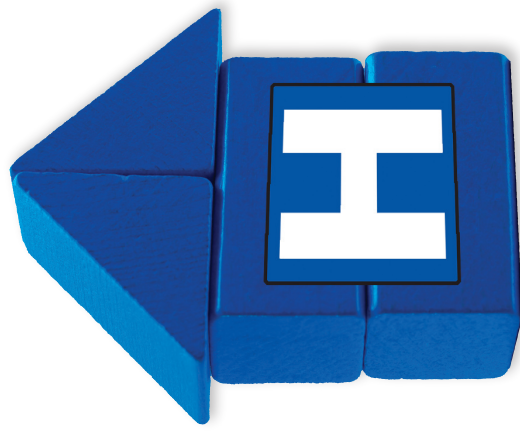
PURPLE means “DNR”

**PINK means
“RESTRICTED EXTREMITY”**

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

A survey was conducted in November, 2006, of Oregon hospitals to evaluate our risk for such an event. The results showed that seven different colors /methods were being used to designate allergy status with patient wrist bands and four different colors were being used to designate DNR status.

Our risk was apparent.

Standardize the colors being used for Allergies, Fall Risk, DNR, and Restricted Extremity in all Oregon 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 healthcare 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 four different color-coded “alert” wristbands that we are going to discuss because they are the most commonly ones used.

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 the patient receives.

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 indicating this person needs to be monitored 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.

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.

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” arm bands upon assessment, hand-off of care and facility transfer communication.