

Patient briefing



Information

22 November 2005

This information is for
hospital inpatients

Why you should wear a wristband when you are staying in hospital

When you are in hospital, it is essential to wear a wristband (also known as an identity band) with accurate details about you on it. It ensures that staff can identify you correctly and give you the right care.

The National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) has received 236 reports of incidents relating to missing wristbands or wristbands with incorrect information on them. Three patients had unnecessary x-rays, three patients received the wrong treatment, and an allergy was inadequately recorded.

The NPSA has issued advice to the NHS on how to promote the use of wristbands and therefore reduce the chances of these errors occurring again.

What to expect when you are in hospital

It should be explained to you, either in a pre-admission letter or when you are admitted to hospital, that you are expected to wear a wristband at all times to ensure your safety during your stay.

A member of staff should put a wristband on you as soon as you are admitted to hospital and you should wear this throughout your stay. If you do not have a wristband, please ask a member of staff for one. If it comes off or is uncomfortable, ask a member of staff to replace it.

The wristband will be placed on the arm that you use for writing. This is because the other arm may be used for medical procedures requiring, for example, a drip. These tend to be placed in the non-writing arm so that the inconvenience to you is minimised. Placing the wristband on the writing arm means that there is less chance of it being removed during a procedure on the other arm.

The wristband will include all essential information about you that staff need. All hospital patients, including babies, children and older people should wear a wristband at all times.

Further work on patient identification

New technologies such as barcodes and radio tags are being introduced in some hospitals to help identify patients and confirm initial checks by hospital staff. These will be located in the wristbands alongside the patient details.

The NPSA is working on standardising wristbands so that they have the same design and contain the same information in all hospitals across the NHS. This will help staff who work in a variety of NHS organisations across England and Wales to make patient care safer. The NPSA will publish further information on this in due course.

More information

If you would like more information about the NPSA's work on wristbands or patient identification, visit our website at www.npsa.nhs.uk/advice