

**HACKETTSTOWN REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER  
ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES**

**COLOR CODED WRIST BANDS IDENTIFYING PATIENT RISK FACTORS**

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**Effective Date: November 2008**

**Policy No: PC29**

**Cross Referenced:**

**Origin: Nursing**

**Reviewed Date:**

**Authority: Chief Nursing Officer**

**Revised Date: June 2013**

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**SCOPE**

All medical and clinical staff.

**PURPOSE**

To have a uniform process that identifies and communicates patient specific risk factors or special needs by standardizing the use of color coded wristbands based on the patient's assessment, wishes and medical status.

**POLICY**

Color coded wristbands are used in healthcare settings to quickly communicate a certain state, healthcare condition or an alert that a patient may have. **The presence of a color coded wrist band is an alert only; check the patient's record for specific information.**

**Objectives:**

1. To reduce the risk of potential for confusion associated with the use of color coded wristbands.
2. To communicate patient safety risks to all healthcare providers.
3. To include the patient's family members and significant others in the communication process.
4. To promote safe healthcare.
5. To adopt the following risk-reduction strategies:
  - a. Application or removal of color coded wristbands will occur only by a nurse or licensed staff person conducting an assessment.
  - b. In the event that a colored alert wristband has to be removed for a treatment or procedure, a nurse should remove the band and then reconfirm the patient's risks and replace the band as appropriate immediately following the treatment or procedure..
  - c. Labels, stickers, or other visual cues will be used in the medical record to communicate risk factors or color coded wristband application, using the same corresponding color and text associated with the colored band.
  - d. "Social cause" wristbands, such as the "Live Strong" and other causes, should not be worn by patients while in the hospital. Staff should have family remove them from the patient and take them home or store them with other personal items. This is to avert confusion with the color coded wristbands and to enhance patient safety practices.
  - e. To assist the patient and family in becoming partners in the care provided and safety measures being used, patient and family education will be conducted regarding the meanings of the color-coded wristbands, the alert associated with each wristband and the risk associated with "social cause" wristbands and why patients are asked to remove them.

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**PROCEDURE**

Responsibilities of the nurse:

1. Assess and identify individual patient for risk factors.
2. Educate the patient and family on the color codes.
3. Apply the appropriate color coded wristbands:
  - a. red = allergy
  - b. yellow = fall risk
  - c. green = latex allergy
  - d. purple = Do Not Resuscitate
  - e. pink = restricted limb
4. Remove “social cause” wristbands or complete the “Patient Refusal Form” and have patient/family member sign.
5. Document application of colored wristband(s) as indicated.
6. Place patient refusal form in chart if indicated.

***Reference:*** *A Safety Initiative from the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services and the New Jersey Hospital Association*