

Documentation of Allergy Status

Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to prevent or mitigate the incidence of allergic reactions by providing a process for documentation of allergy status.

An allergy is defined as the state in which the body becomes hypersensitive to particular allergens. The symptoms of allergy can range from a mild rash to anaphylactic shock, which can be fatal.

The policy aims to:

- increase awareness and identify patients who present with known allergies.
- reduce the number of allergic reactions.
- reduce the risk resulting from medication or other allergens that trigger an existing allergic reaction(s).
- provide staff direction on documentation regarding allergy status.

2. Directives

The allergy form is to be placed at the front of the patient record (first page of every record).

- Physicians will dictate allergy status in doctor's narrative notes
- Physicians and all regulated Health Care Professionals (e.g. nurses, dietitians, pharmacists) and approved non-regulated health care professionals (e.g. medical imaging technologists, radiation therapists), collectively named as Designated Health Care Professionals, can document allergy information; and consult with Most Responsible Provider when modifying or cancelling existing allergy information.
- Other allergy information (contraindication, intolerance and untoward side-effects) can be documented on the allergy form.
- Once form is completed and if allergy identified, the clerk will affix the red allergy label to the form; and will fax to pharmacy if appropriate to local cancer centre policy.

A. Confirmation of current allergy:

Allergy status may be verified by

- Reviewing allergy status in physician's narrative notes and/or dictation
- Reviewing the completion of allergy section by patient on the Patient Reported Information and Symptom Measurement (PRISM) form and confirming documentation with patient
- Verbally confirming with patient

B. Ongoing Care:

If patient develops new or suspected allergies then it is the Designated Health Care Professionals' responsibility to document this by updating the Allergy form.

C. Documenting Allergy Status in Other Health Records:

Designated Health Care Professional ensures documentation of allergies on discharge prescriptions, discharge letters and interhospital transfer letters. Include allergy status on all other patient care documents (paper or electronic).

3. Patient Education

Counsel patients who experience an allergic reaction or drug intolerance. They should have an understanding where possible, of their responsibilities to inform subsequent healthcare professionals of this reaction.

4. Inpatients

All Inpatients who have identified allergies will have a red wristband.

5. Staff Education

The allergy policy must be included in staff and physician orientation on safe medication practices.

A significant percentage of allergic reactions should be avoidable; however some medication incidents have occurred in patients with allergies because of:

- Incomplete documentation with allergy status.
- Inconsistent location of documentation of allergy status.
- Documentation of the drug allergen using brand name.
- Information of allergy status not being available to relevant health care professionals.
- Patients being mislabelled as allergic as a result of both staff and patient misinterpretation of allergy.
- Lack of therapeutic knowledge, for example: patients with a documented penicillin allergy receiving penicillin based antibiotic.
- Non-drug allergies such as latex being overlooked.

6. Definitions

Allergy: an adverse reaction to a drug or substance which is due to an immunological response.

Contraindications: a symptom or condition that makes a particular treatment or procedure inadvisable.

Intolerance: a non-immune reaction that is characterized by the inability to properly metabolize or absorb a substance or food in the digestive tract.

Side-effects: an untoward clinical response associated with exposure to, or use of, a substance.

Designated Health Care Professionals: Professionals regulated by regulatory colleges under the Health Professions Act, e.g. Physicians, Pharmacists, Nurses, and Dieticians. For complete list, see BC Ministry of Health Professional Regulation. Also includes approved Non-regulated Health Care Professionals, which are non-regulated professionals designated through the health organizations approval process (e.g Medical Imaging Technologists).