



Patient safety and quality are central to the delivery of health care in Ireland. Numerous international studies have identified patients in acute hospitals, whose condition deteriorated unexpectedly, leading to cardiac arrest or even death, may have received suboptimal care. Early changes in patient observations in the 24 hours preceding cardiac arrest or death was evident, but was not detected, or communicated to the appropriate personnel in many cases, leading to a delay in medical intervention.

Early Warning Scores have been developed to assist with early detection of patient deterioration, using a standardised approach to assess acute illness severity and escalate care to a higher level in a timely matter, the focus being on preventing adverse incidents rather than dealing with the consequences.

The National Early Warning Score (NEWS) for non-pregnant adult patients is an aggregate Weighted scoring system, validated for both medical and surgical patients. Six physiological parameters are used as indicators of early deterioration (respiratory rate, heart rate, systolic blood pressure, temperature, neurological status and oxygen saturations). A score of 3 is also assigned if any supplementary O₂ is administered. The parameters are scored between 0 (best) and 3 (worst). These scores are added together and a total score is recorded which is the National Early Warning Score (NEWS). A trend can be seen as to whether the patient's condition is improving, with a lowering NEWS or dis-improving, with an increase NEWS. If the NEWS is ≥ 4 or 5 on supplementary O₂, and infection is suspected then Screening for Sepsis is triggered.

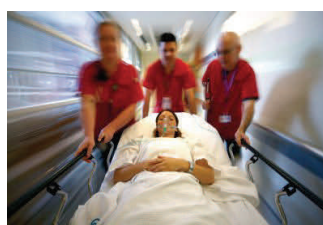


The NEWS is used for patients who are admitted to medical and surgical wards or on discharge back to the wards from ICU, CCU, Endoscopy suite and Operating Theatre Recovery Rooms. It is also used for all patients, when a decision is made to admit in the Emergency Department.

Key points about the National Early Warning Score

Action taken early can save lives!!!

- The NEWS does not replace clinical judgement - if you are concerned about a patient escalate care regardless of the score.
- The NEWS tracks the patient's condition throughout their hospital stay.
- Abnormal respiratory rate is one of the earliest signs of patient deterioration.
- When certain scores are reached staff must follow the agreed escalation protocol to trigger swift action and bring help to the bedside. A score of 3 in any single parameter must be acted upon immediately.
- The NEWS triggers screening for Sepsis when there is a NEWS of ≥ 4 or 5 if a patient is on supplementary oxygen and if infection is suspected.
- In a small percentage of patients the NEWS does not identify deterioration.
- Always inform the Clinical Nurse Manager if concerned about a patient.



- Where help does not arrive within a certain timeframe the nurse must escalate the care of the patient to a higher level e.g. if the Senior House Officer does not arrive within the timeframe identified for a particular score, or the nurse is not happy with the progress of the patient then the Registrar must be called, or where appropriate the Emergency Response System must be activated.
- Use the ISBAR (Identify, Situation, Background, Assessment, and Recommendation) structured communication tool to relate messages about deteriorating patients (*please refer to the ISBAR tool box talk for more information*).
- Refer any issues to your hospital implementation governance group/committee.

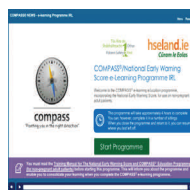
ISBAR	
Communication Tool (SBAR) Patient Deterioration	
Identify	Name Hospital/Department/Location
Situation	Problem What is the problem? (What is the patient's condition?)
Background	What is the patient's history? (What is the patient's background?)
Assessment	What are the signs and symptoms? (What are the patient's vital signs?)
Recommendation	What do you recommend? (What do you need to do?)

NEWS - National Clinical Guideline and COMPASS[®] Education Programme

- The National Early Warning Score – National Clinical Guideline No. 1 was quality assured by the National Clinical Effectiveness Committee, DOH and endorsed by the Minister for Health in November 2014. This National Clinical Guideline can be accessed at: <http://health.gov.ie/patient-safety/ncec/national-clinical-guidelines-2/c-d/>



- The multidisciplinary education programme, recommended by the National Early Warning Score – National Clinical Guideline No. 1, to support the NEWS is the COMPASS[®] education programme. The COMPASS[®] E-Learning programme is now available on HSEland at the following link: <https://www.hseland.ie/tohm/portal/>. It has been approved by the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI) for 8 External CPDs (Continuing Professional Development Credits). This CPD Recognition is accepted by all Irish Medical Postgraduate Training Bodies. The COMPASS[®] Classroom and E-Learning programmes have both received Category 1 approval by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) with 8 CEUs (Continuing Education Units) awarded.



More information is available on the website, fast access address as follows: www.hse.ie/go/nationalearlywarningscore/

Acknowledgement: Eilish Croke, Programme Manager, National Acute Medicine Programme and Celine Conroy, National Lead, National Early Warning Score. Updated 2015.