



19 March 2026

Harm from incorrect recording of a penicillin allergy as a penicillamine allergy

Dear Colleague,

In November 2025, a [National Patient Safety Alert \(NatPSA/2025/006/NHSPS\)](#) was issued highlighting a significant risk wherein healthcare staff may incorrectly record a patient's penicillin allergy as a penicillamine allergy. This look-alike, sound-alike error could result in a patient with a documented penicillin allergy receiving a penicillin-based antibiotic, potentially leading to a life-threatening anaphylactic reaction.

'Penicillin' refers to a group of broad-spectrum antibiotics, while penicillamine is a medication used for the treatment of Wilson's disease and severe active rheumatoid arthritis; it is not classified as an antibiotic.

This [National Patient Safety Alert](#) requires action from acute, community, and mental health providers, health and justice services, primary care settings including nursing and care homes, general practice, and community pharmacies. Due to the importance of record sharing, all providers are urged to review patient records in accordance with the outlined actions.

Actions required:

- **Primary and secondary care organisations:**
 - Identify patients recorded as having a penicillamine allergy by running a report in relevant digital systems in primary and secondary care.
 - Clinically review the accuracy of the allergy status (recognising some patients may have a genuine penicillamine allergy status) and amend accordingly.
 - Additionally, there is significant risk to assigning a penicillin allergy to a patient who is only intolerant of penicillins (i.e. does not have an anaphylactic reaction but experiences nausea or other symptoms) - around 6% of people's records carry a penicillin allergy label but up to 90–95% of these labels are thought to be inaccurate¹. Patients with a penicillin allergy label receive alternative antibiotics resulting in less effective management of serious infections and increased harm, length of hospital stay, NHS costs and antimicrobial resistance. Follow internal penicillin de-labelling policy where available.
 - Ensure allergy records in electronic prescribing and related digital systems that record allergy status are updated.



- For GP practices – Ardens searches are available on both SystemOne (see Appendix 1) and EMIS (see Appendix 2).
 - Ardens tools are identified in Appendix 3 (Ardens Manager) and Appendix 4 (pop up within the clinical systems).
- **To prevent reoccurrence:**
 - **Secondary care** organisations should ensure allergy guidance and training cover safe recording of allergy status in electronic prescribing systems and related digital healthcare systems, including the need to check and correct allergy status on admission and discharge.
 - **Primary care** should implement additional checks when staff (especially non-clinical staff) input allergy status into GP systems, eg consider the need for a clinical review if penicillamine is the stated allergen.
 - **All organisations** should work with digital system suppliers and user groups to develop and deploy additional built-in mitigations to reduce the likelihood of inadvertent recording of the wrong allergy, such as adding alerts and modifying search terms. Organisations should prioritise the safe deployment of upgrades to their digital systems where suppliers have developed effective mitigations and safety features.
 - For GP practices – Ardens has created a pop-up alert for both SystemOne and EMIS (Appendix 4) when coding a patient with a penicillamine allergy or adverse reaction.

Humber and North Yorkshire Assurance

This [National Patient Safety Alert](#) is for action by acute, community and mental health providers, health and justice services, primary care including nursing and care homes, general practice and community pharmacy.

Humber and North Yorkshire ICB are requesting all relevant organisations to confirm compliance with this Patient Safety Alert via an MS Forms questionnaire. If the alert does not apply (e.g., your organisation does not keep patient allergy records), you must still respond by selecting “**Not applicable**” and adding a comment in the form's final section. Please access the MS Forms questionnaire via the following link: [MS Forms NPSA](#).

Further resources and support available

- [NHS England » National patient safety alert – harm from incorrect recording of a penicillin allergy as a penicillamine allergy](#)



Humber and North Yorkshire
Health and Care Partnership



**Humber and
North Yorkshire**
Integrated Care Board (ICB)

The Humber and North Yorkshire ICB Quality & Patient Safety Team, along with the Pharmacy and Medicines Optimisation team, are available to offer additional guidance and support. For further assistance, please contact:

hnyicb.medicinesmanagementprojects@nhs.net

Should organisations determine that it is not feasible to complete the clinical review and related actions within the specified timeframe, please notify HNY ICB to discuss and agree an action plan.

Kind regards,

Quality & Patient Safety Team, and Pharmacy and Medicines Optimisation Team,
Humber and North Yorkshire ICB.

References

1. Krishna et al. [Multicentre observational study to investigate feasibility of a direct oral penicillin challenge in de-labelling 'low risk' patients with penicillin allergy by non-allergy healthcare professionals](#). J Infect. March 2024.



Appendix 1

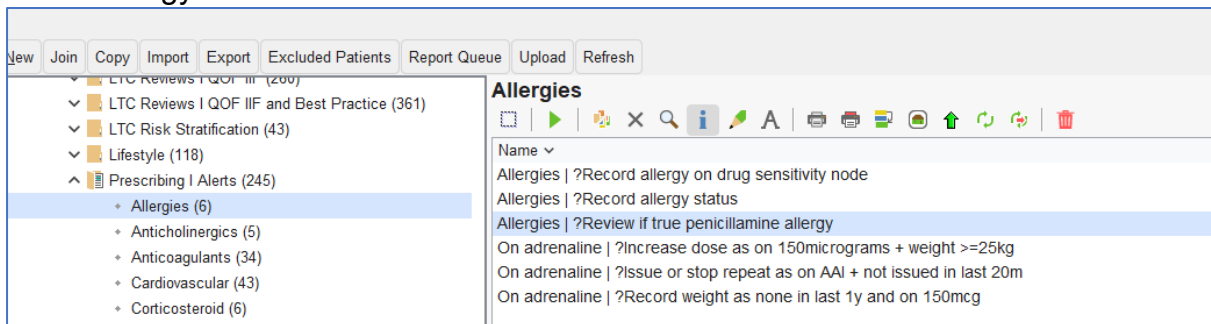
TPP SystemOne

Reporting > Clinical Reporting > Arden's Ltd.



'Prescribing | Alerts' > Allergies > Allergies | ?Review if true penicillamine allergy.

- This search will identify patients based on the drug sensitivity code or the allergy/adverse reaction coded:



This report is linked via a quick action button from our [CAS Alerts](#) template, as below:



CAS Alerts

Home | **Sep-Dec 2025** | Jan-Aug 2025 | 2024 | Jun-Dec 2023 | Jan-May 2023 | 2022 | 2021 | 2009-2020

CAS Alerts: Sep - Dec 2025

[help & feedback](#)

Nov 2025	Check to confirm if true penicillamine allergy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Report	(NPS)
Nov 2025	Consider alternative as supply shortage - ibandronic acid 150mg tablets	<input type="checkbox"/>	Report	CPE
Nov 2025	Check serial number as recalled - Freestyle Libre 3 or Libre 3 plus	<input type="checkbox"/>	Report	Abbt
Nov 2025	Consider alternative as supply shortage - propranolol 80mg + 160mg MR caps	<input type="checkbox"/>	Report	CPE
Nov 2025	Advice that Rybelsus 3mg tabs T od bioequivalent is 1.5mg T od	<input type="checkbox"/>	Report	emc
	Advice that Rybelsus 7mg tabs T od bioequivalent is 4mg T od	<input type="checkbox"/>	Report	emc
	Advice that Rybelsus 14mg tabs T od bioequivalent is 9mg T od	<input type="checkbox"/>	Report	emc
Oct 2025	Advice that Bydureon BCise pre-filled pens are discontinued + switch to alternative	<input type="checkbox"/>	Report	CPE

Show recordings from other templates
 Show empty recordings

Information | Print | Suspend | **Ok** | Cancel | Show Incomplete Fields



Appendix 2

Optum EMIS

Searches identify patients who have an allergy or adverse reaction coded in their records:

The screenshot shows the Optum EMIS interface. At the top, there are tabs for 'Add / Edit', 'Actions', 'Run Report', 'View', and 'Find'. Below the tabs, there are two yellow notification banners: 'All resources (clinical templates, document templates, protocols and concepts) have downloaded and are up to date.' and 'Smartcard Alert: Smartcard detected, click to assign this smartcard to my EMIS Web account.' The main content area is titled 'Ardens Content' and features a tree view on the left and a list of search results on the right. The tree view includes folders for 'Administration' and 'Prescribing', with 'Allergies' expanded to show sub-folders like 'Anticholinergic', 'Anticoagulants', 'Cardiovascular', 'Corticosteroid', 'Dermatology', and 'Diabetes'. The search results table has columns for 'Name', 'Population Count', '%', and 'Last Run'. The first result is 'Allergies | Review if true penicillamine allergy', which is highlighted in yellow. Below it are three search criteria, each with a magnifying glass icon: 'On adrenaline | ?Increase dose as on 150micrograms + weight >=25kg', 'On adrenaline | ?Issue or end course as on AAI + not issued in last 20m', and 'On adrenaline | ?Record weight as on junior dose and no weight in last ...'.

Name	Population Count	%	Last Run
Allergies Review if true penicillamine allergy			
On adrenaline ?Increase dose as on 150micrograms + weight >=25kg			
On adrenaline ?Issue or end course as on AAI + not issued in last 20m			
On adrenaline ?Record weight as on junior dose and no weight in last ...			



Appendix 3

Ardens Manager

The screenshot displays the 'Prescribing' section of the Ardens Manager interface. The top navigation bar includes 'ALERTS', 'MONITORING', 'ACTIVITY', 'ENVIRONMENT', 'COST EFFECTIVENESS', 'PPA', 'OPTIMISATION', and 'REVIEWS'. A search bar contains 'penicil' and an 'ADD REPORT' button is visible in the top right.

The main content area is divided into two panels. The left panel, titled 'Rules', shows a search result for 'Allergies | ?Review if true penicillamine allergy' with a status of 'Other' and a 'REPORT' button. The right panel provides a detailed view of this rule, including its ID (20124) and options to 'TEST', 'EDIT', or 'VIEW'.

APPLIES TO
Data source: Clinical System
Report: Registration status: GMS | Active (today)

RULES
Rule 1: If ANY of the following criteria are TRUE then **Include** if not then **Exclude**

if ANY of the following

- Activity: Code is Allergy to penicillamine (294291008)
- Activity: Code is Adverse reaction to penicillamine (218536004)
- Activity: Code is Adverse reaction to penicillamine (292752003)



Appendix 4

Ardens pop-up

For those practices using, Arden's now displays the alert below for SystmOne and EMIS users

The image shows two screenshots of Arden's pop-up alerts. The left screenshot is titled "Question" and the right is "Display Text".

Question

Check penicillamine allergy ardens
help & feedback

You have selected the drug **penicillamine**, which is **not a penicillin antibiotic**. If penicillamine allergy has been incorrectly recorded, please mark in error and review record.

For further information, see [NHS](#)

To disable this pop-up
To deactivate this pop-up, go to Setup > Workflow Support > Protocols > Ardens > Pop ups, then untick the 'Recording penicillamine allergy' protocol

[Why am I seeing this?](#)

Display Text

Check penicillamine adverse reaction

You have selected the drug **penicillamine**, which is **not a penicillin antibiotic**.

If penicillamine adverse reaction has been incorrectly recorded and consultation is not saved, then delete. If consultation has been saved, go to care history > delete > mark as entered in error.

Note: 'Penicillamine allergy' code not available on EMIS so 'Penicillamine adverse reaction' code used instead

For further information, see <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/national-patient-safety-alert-harm-from-incorrect-recording-of-a-penicillin-allergy-as-a-penicillamine-allergy/>

Alert provided by www.ardens.org.uk



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