



## Implementation of National Patient Safety Alert - Steroid Emergency Card to support early recognition and treatment of adrenal crisis in adults – EMIS guide

### **Background**

A National Patient Safety Alert was published in August 2020 by NHS England and NHS Improvement's national patient safety team, this is supported by the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP), the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) and the Society for Endocrinology.<sup>1</sup> The full details are available via this [link](#).

The directive is to issue a NHS Steroid Emergency Card to all patients with adrenal insufficiency or steroid dependence as they are at risk of an adrenal crisis during intercurrent illness or an invasive procedure/surgery if not managed appropriately. The steroid emergency card has been designed to support early recognition and treatment of adrenal crisis in adults.<sup>1</sup>

This card is intended for use in adults. A separate card for children who are on adrenal replacement treatment is available from the British Society for Paediatric Endocrinology and Diabetes [link](#)

### **Actions**

The alert specifies that practices should complete the following actions as soon as possible and no later than **13 May 2021**<sup>2</sup>

- All organisations that initiate steroid prescriptions should review their processes/ policies and their digital systems/software and prompts to ensure that prescribers issue a Steroid Emergency Card to all eligible patients, as outlined in new guidance.
- Prescribers undertaking standard/scheduled reviews (e.g. in clinics or when authorising repeat prescriptions) should review their processes/policies and their digital systems/software and prompts to ensure all eligible patients prescribed steroids have been assessed, and where necessary issue a Steroid Emergency Card.

NHS Steroid Emergency Cards should be given to:

- All adults with adrenal insufficiency, such as those with Addison's disease, congenital adrenal hyperplasia, and hypothalamo-pituitary damage from tumours or surgery that are steroid dependent.
- All patients receiving exogenous steroids at a dose of prednisolone 5mg/day or equivalent for 4 weeks or longer. This is across all routes of administration (oral, topical, inhaled or intranasal) as they are also at risk of adrenal insufficiency.
- Patients taking inhaled beclomethasone >1000mcg/day or equivalent or fluticasone >500mcg/day or equivalent this is because they are at risk of adrenal insufficiency due to hypothalamo-pituitary axis suppression.
- Patients taking more than 40mg prednisolone per day or equivalent for longer than 1 week or repeated short courses of oral doses. e.g. patients on rescue treatment for asthma or COPD.



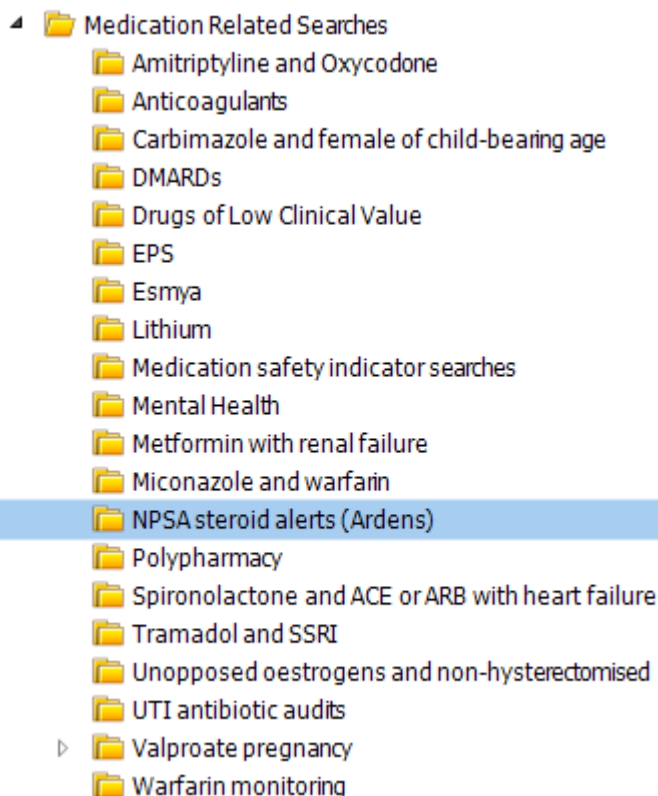
- Patients taking a course of oral glucocorticoid within a year of stopping long term (months or years) therapy.
- Patients taking drugs that affect CYP3A4 (CP450) metabolism with a steroid treatment. Clinicians should have a high degree of clinical suspicion and give stress doses of hydrocortisone if there is any concern with regards to the development of an adrenal crisis during an intercurrent illness or a procedure in these patients.

Dose conversion charts are available in the [PrescQIPP Hot Topic](#) or from [Specialist Pharmacy Services](#)

### **Identifying patients who require a NHS Steroid Emergency Cards**

Ardens searches are available on EMIS to identify patients who should be given a NHS Steroid Emergency Cards.

To access the searches, navigate to the **Population Reporting** module > **Ardens Searches** > **Ardens Clinical Safety Searches** > **Medication Related Searches** > **NPSA steroid alerts** folder:

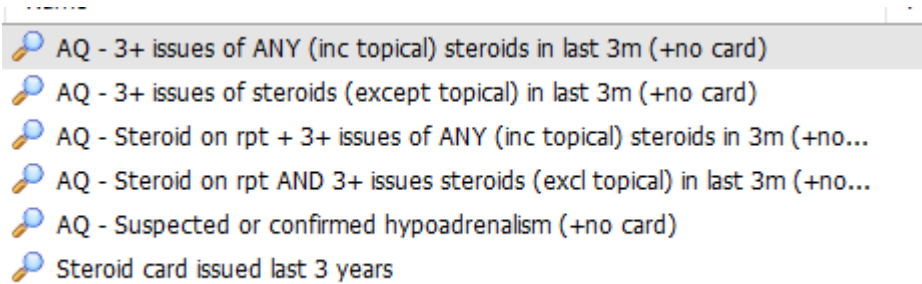


If the search is not visible in the Population Reporting this may be because the Ardens searches are not up to date on EMIS. Ardens searches for EMIS can be downloaded via the Ardens Portal. Please see this [link](#) for instructions.



This search folder contains searches displaying patients who have been issued more than 3 steroid prescriptions within the last 3 months, who have not been read coded as receiving a steroid card in the last 3 years. They are broken down by any steroid medication, or non-topical steroid medication, as well as separating those patients where these medications are on repeat.

There is an additional search in this folder identifying patients who have a confirmed or suspected code for hypoadrenalism on their records:



Use these searches to identify patients who should be given a NHS Steroid Emergency Card. Please note these searches include all steroid issues, each patient record will need to be reviewed to see whether a NHS Steroid Emergency Card is needed, patients using low dose inhaled corticosteroids might not need a card. Please refer to the [PrescQIPP Hot Topic](#) for dose conversions.

There are searches that include or exclude topical steroids. Including patients prescribed topical steroids will increase the number of patients in the search and most patients on topical steroids are unlikely to be having doses sufficient to cause adrenal suppression. Review whether patients using large volumes of topical steroids need a NHS Steroid Emergency Card at annual medication review.

See the [Ardens](#) website for further information.

## **Issuing a NHS Steroid Emergency Card**

Once the patients have been identified and reviewed they should be issued a NHS Steroid Emergency Card if appropriate. A printable steroid card is available in the Ardens document templates folder and is called: "Corticosteroid monitoring (v14.2)(Ardens)".

When issuing a NHS Steroid Emergency Card enter the read code "Steroid treatment card issued" (Concept ID 711121000000102).

Patients who use smartphones may download a pdf copy of the card to use as the lock screen of their phone. The link is available from the British Society of Endocrinology [link](#)

Alternatively NHS Steroid Emergency Cards can be obtained from:

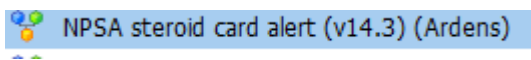
- NHS Forms at NHS Business Services Authority (NHS BSA) <http://www.nhsforms.co.uk/>
- Primary Care Support England PCSE online <https://secure.pcse.england.nhs.uk/forms/pcsssignin.aspx>



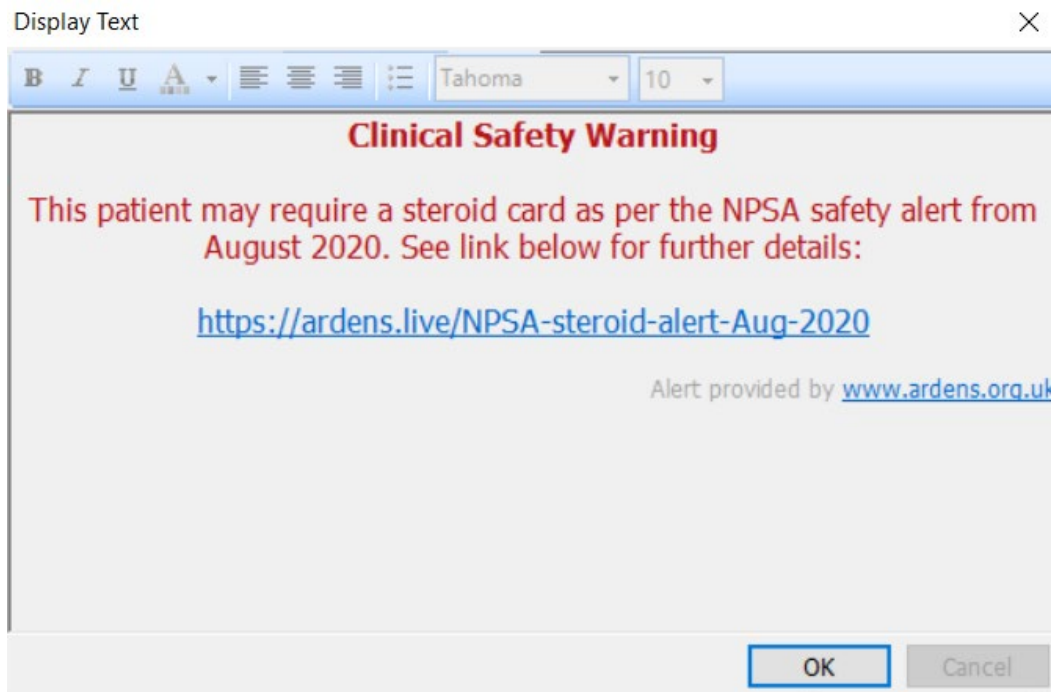
## **Ongoing issues of NHS Steroid Emergency Cards – Protocol to prompt prescribers**

Using the searches above will enable patients who need a NHS Steroid Emergency Card to be identified. For newly initiated steroids Ardens provide a protocol to use on EMIS which will pop up to prompt consideration of a steroid alert card if an at-risk patient has not had a card issued within the last 3 years. This is triggered when issuing steroid medication (oral, rectal, inhaled but NOT topical).

The protocol should be active at each practice. This can be checked on EMIS **Configuration > Templates & Protocols > Ardens > Clinical Safety Protocols > NPSA Steroid Card Alert.**



This is the warning box that will pop up when the protocol is triggered:



## **References**

1. PrescQIPP Hot Topic Implementing the NHS Steroid Emergency Card National Patient Safety Alert (NatPSA). Accessed 22/04/2021 <https://www.prescqipp.info/our-resources/webkits/hot-topics/>
2. NPSA alert Steroid Emergency Card to support early recognition and treatment of adrenal crisis in adults. Accessed 22/04/2021 <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/NPSA-Emergency-Steroid-Card-FINAL-2.3.pdf>
3. Ardens Support website Accessed 22/04/2021 <http://support-s1.ardens.org.uk/support/solutions/articles/31000157350-corticosteroid-monitoring>
4. Specialist Pharmacy Services Guidance on issuing the Steroid Emergency Card in adults. Accessed 22/04/21 <https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/advice-on-issuing-the-steroid-emergency-card-update-23rd-december-2020/>