



Martha's Rule: Concerns about a patient's condition

A patient safety service that allows patients, families, and carers to request a rapid review if they have concerns about a patient's condition.

Patient information factsheet

If you are an inpatient on one of the wards in our hospital, you may see Martha's Rule posters making you and your family or carers aware of the support available to you if there is a noticeable worsening in your condition.

Martha's Rule is a patient safety critical care initiative from NHS England that allows patients, families, and carers to request a rapid review if they have concerns about a patient's condition.

The initiative is intended to improve communication and responsiveness in hospitals. It was introduced on selected wards from December 2024, with the intention of implementing it across all our hospital's wards by the end of Spring 2025.

You can call directly on our dedicated Martha's Rule line, 24 hours a day: 07443 196 773

What things might make me call?

Some changes that you may notice before anyone else:

- The patient seems different to usual (not themselves)
- Breathing differently
- Sweating or unusual skin colour
- Reduced urine amount or not passing urine
- More sleepy than usual or confused
- Hands feel cold or very hot
- In pain and looks uncomfortable
- You are worried about their condition



After prioritising the urgency of the problem, the team will visit the ward to discuss your concerns. The Critical Care Outreach Team will liaise with the patient's medical team and instigate treatment or further review if necessary. They will also talk to you about your concerns and let you know what actions they have taken and why.

When should I not make a call?

This service is only for concerns about unwell patients who require an urgent clinical response. For any general concerns, for example, nursing care, facilities or complaints, please speak to the ward Nurses or ward Manager. You can also contact the Matron to discuss any issues further. The nursing staff on the ward can inform you about how you can contact the Matron for that ward. You can also contact our Patient advice and liaison service (PALS) - details below.

The Critical Care Outreach Team

The Critical Care Outreach Team (CCOT) is a Nurse led team that supports ward Nurses and Doctors who are caring for acutely unwell adult inpatients outside of our intensive care unit (ITU). CCOT Nurses are senior nurses extensively experienced in the assessment and care of acutely unwell patients. The CCOT works closely with ITU Doctors, who can be asked to review patients, accompany the team on some ward rounds and take referrals overnight.

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please email whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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Date published: 04/12/2024
Review date: 04/12/2026
Ref: SC/CCOT/Martha'sRule/01

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