

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION  
CALIFORNIA CORRECTIONAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES  
Health Care Department Operations Manual

**3.5.42 High Alert Medications**

**(a) Policy**

California Correctional Health Care Services (CCHCS) Systemwide Pharmacy and Therapeutics (P&T) Committee shall maintain a list of High Alert Medications and mitigation strategies to prevent patient harm when using High Alert Medications. The High Alert Medication List and mitigation strategies shall be disseminated to all health care staff, implemented when clinically appropriate at applicable institutions, and reviewed and updated at least annually.

**(b) Purpose**

To ensure the safe and effective use of High Alert Medications and the communication of the High Alert Medication List and mitigation strategies to all health care staff.

**(c) Responsibility**

**(1) Statewide**

The Systemwide P&T Committee Chairperson shall ensure a High Alert Medication List and mitigation strategies are maintained and that appropriate tools, training, and technical assistance are available to all health care staff to support clinically appropriate use of the list.

**(2) Regional**

Regional Health Care Executives are responsible for implementation of this policy at the subset of institutions within an assigned region and shall ensure that the High Alert Medications policy, mitigation strategies, and other relevant decision support tools are disseminated and accessible for all health care staff.

**(3) Institutional**

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for implementation of this policy at the institution level. Program Leads shall ensure that the institution uses existing forums such as local quality committees to disseminate the High Alert Medications policy and procedure, mitigation strategies, and other relevant decision support tools to all institution health care staff.

**(d) Procedure**

- (1) The High Alert Medication List and mitigation strategies shall be reviewed and updated annually to provide guidance to health care staff about medications considered High Alert Medications and the appropriate handling of High Alert Medications to prevent patient harm.
- (2) The High Alert Medication List and mitigation strategies shall be posted and available on the CCHCS Lifeline Patient Safety page.
- (3) Data shall be drawn from the electronic Health Care Incident Reporting System including, but not limited to, medication related health care incidents, current medication usage across the health care system, industry best practices, and community standards and be reported to the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee for consideration for addition to the High Alert Medication List.
- (4) Decision support tools shall be revised or new tools developed to assist care teams and other health care staff in identifying and mitigating risks to patients associated with use of medications on the High Alert Medication List (e.g., High Alert Medication mitigation strategies, Patient Summary, Patient Registries, Patient Medication Profile, or Patient Risk Profile).
- (5) Institution staff shall not alter the High Alert Medication List.
- (6) Recommendation to add or remove a medication from the High Alert Medication List shall be submitted to [PharmacyandTherapeuticsCommunications@cdcr.ca.gov](mailto:PharmacyandTherapeuticsCommunications@cdcr.ca.gov).

**References**

- The Joint Commission, Standard MM.01.01.03
- Institute for Safe Medication Practices ([www.ismp.org/resources](http://www.ismp.org/resources))

**Revision History**

Effective: 08/2018

Revised: 05/16/2023