

MEWS and NEWS2 Documentation Cheat Sheet

Reviewed by the BastionGPT Clinical Advisory Board · September 2026 · Reproduces no NEWS2 chart or scoring table

MEWS and NEWS2 are aggregate track-and-trigger scores: each vital sign earns points by its distance from a reference range, the points are summed, and an extreme value in any one parameter is its own trigger. MEWS (Subbe and colleagues, 2001) has no single rights holder and exists in many local variants; NEWS2 (Royal College of Physicians, 2017) is copyrighted, free to reproduce unmodified with acknowledgment, and mandated only in NHS England. Defensible charting names the score and version, records every parameter with its time, states the total and any single-parameter trigger, and documents the escalation as a timeline with the response.

Score, version, oxygen scale NEWS2 as published or the facility MEWS variant

Do: name the instrument, version date, and policy; EHR or hand computed; for NEWS2 the SpO2 scale in use and who decided Scale 2.

Pitfall: "MEWS 4" with no version or policy; a Scale 2 patient with no recorded decision.

Complete set, with times RR counted; SpO2 with device and flow; ACVPU

Do: every parameter with its clock time; respiratory rate counted for a full minute; oxygen device and flow; new confusion asked about.

Pitfall: a respiratory rate copied across six sets; an SpO2 with no oxygen recorded; an incomplete set scored as complete.

Total and single-parameter trigger two triggers, read separately

Do: the total, its contributing parameters, and any parameter at its extreme score; new confusion scores red on NEWS2; cite the policy band.

Pitfall: a total of 3 charted "no action" while one parameter sat at its maximum; a confused patient scored alert.

Trend and clinical concern concern overrides the score

Do: compare with prior sets and name the direction; record concern and what prompted it as a trigger; note frequency raised on judgment.

Pitfall: three rising sets with no comment because each was still low; a worried nurse left out of the record.

Escalation as a timeline who, route, time, content, response

Do: each contact with name, role, route, clock time, SBAR content, and the response; repeat attempts and the next level up the chain.

Pitfall: "MD aware" with no time, name, content, or response, which reads as no call at all.

Response and reassessment orders, interval, improved or not

Do: responder assessment and orders with times; new interval and who ordered it; sets at that interval; repeat escalation when not improving.

Pitfall: "obs hourly" followed by a four-hour gap; a score still above the trigger with nobody called again.

Limits, criteria, refusal, late entry each gets its own sentence

Do: altered criteria with author, reason, review date; a DNR is not do-not-escalate; refusal with capacity; late entry with both times.

Pitfall: a DNR read as "do not call"; altered criteria with no review date; a 12:45 entry time-stamped 12:06.

Before the note is signed

- ☐ Score name and version stated
- ☐ Every parameter charted with its time
- ☐ Trigger status written: aggregate, single, concern
- ☐ Trend read and concern recorded
- ☐ Each contact timed with name, route, response
- ☐ Ordered interval met, repeat escalation charted
- ☐ Limits, altered criteria, late entries labeled

Drafting with AI

Give it the facts: the score and version in use, the parameters with their times and the oxygen device, the total and any single parameter at maximum, the prior sets, your concern, the contacts with time, route, and content, the response and orders, the new interval, and any altered criteria or treatment limits.

"Draft a MEWS escalation note: facility MEWS version March 2026; 09/17 12:00 set RR 26, SpO2 89 on 2 L, SBP 96, HR 118, temp 38.4, new confusion; total 8, single-parameter trigger met; rapid response called 12:02, arrived 12:06; sepsis pathway 12:15."

Never paste patient-identifying information into consumer AI tools. BastionGPT is HIPAA-compliant with a signed BAA on every plan.

Two triggers

aggregate total, single extreme parameter

Name the version

MEWS variants differ by hospital

Concern overrides

the RCP says so, chart it

Timeline, not number

who, when, route, response

MEWS and NEWS2 Documentation Template

Copy or print for your practice · Adapt fields to your organization's, payer's and jurisdiction's documentation requirements. Contains no NEWS2 chart or scoring table.

Setting: _____ Patient (initials): _____ Date: _____ Clinician: _____

Score in use + version or policy: _____ Time of set + oxygen scale or device: _____

Observation set with times

Respiratory rate counted for a full minute · SpO2 with device and flow · systolic blood pressure · heart rate · temperature · consciousness as AVPU or ACVPU with new confusion asked about · the baseline that matters

Total and single-parameter trigger

Aggregate total · contributing parameters · any single parameter at its maximum score · incomplete set noted with the reason · computed by EHR or by hand

Trend and clinical concern

Prior sets with times and totals · direction of change · concern as a trigger in its own right and what prompted it · frequency changed on nursing judgment

Escalation timeline

Each contact: clock time, name and role, route, what was communicated (SBAR: score, trend, request) · response time and content · repeat attempts and the next level · rapid response call and arrival times

Response and orders

Responder assessment · orders and interventions with times · sepsis pathway started or not · new observation interval and who ordered it · disposition and time

Reassessment and repeat escalation

Observations at the ordered interval with times and totals · improved or not · repeat escalation with time and recipient when the score stays above the trigger

Modified criteria, limits, refusal, late entry

Altered calling criteria with author, reason, review date · treatment limits documented (a DNR is not do-not-escalate) · refusal with capacity and alternative · late entry labeled with both times

Clinician (name and credentials): _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____