

Unacceptable Abbreviations

An abbreviation on the “do not use” list should not be used in any of its forms- upper or lower case; with or without periods.

Abbreviation/ Dose Expression	Term	Misinterpretation	Correction
M _{SO} 4, MS, MgSO ₄	morphine sulfate, magnesium sulfate	Confused for one another. Can mean morphine sulfate or magnesium sulfate.	Write “morphine sulfate” or “magnesium sulfate.”
T.I.W.	three times a week.	Mistaken as “three times a day” or “twice weekly” resulting in an overdose.	Write “3 times weekly” or “three times weekly.” Also specify dates & times to be given.
Q.D., QD, q.d., qd Q.O.D., QOD, q.o.d, qod	(every day) (every other day)	Mistaken for each other. The period after the Q can be mistaken for an “I” and the “O” can be mistaken for “L.”	Use “daily” or “every other day.”
U or u	unit	Read as a zero (0) or a four (4), causing a 10-fold overdose or greater (4U seen as “40” or 4useen as 44”).	“Unit” has no acceptable abbreviation. Use “unit.”
IU	international unit	Misread as IV (intravenous) or 10 (ten).	Use “International Units.”
µg	Microgram	Mistaken for mg (milligrams) resulting in one thousand-fold dosing overdose.	Write “mcg”
Trailing zero (1.0 mg)	1 mg	Misread as 10mg if the decimal point is not seen or missing.	Never write a zero by itself after a decimal point (X mg).
Lack of leading zero (.5 mg)	0.5 mg	Misread as 5mg.	Always use a zero before a decimal point (0.X mg)
per os	Orally	The “os” can be mistaken for “left eye.”	Use “PO,” “by mouth,” or “orally”
TAC	Triamcinolone	Tetracaine, ADRENALIN, cocaine	Use the complete spelling for drug names.
D/C	Discharge Discontinue	Interpreted as discontinue whatever medications follow (typically discharge meds)	Write “discharge, discontinue” or “step”

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