

MEDICAL ABBREVIATIONS POLICY

The Department of Pharmacy Services will carry out orders with abbreviations and/or symbols only if they appear in the medical staff's approved abbreviations listing. If unacceptable or confusing abbreviations and/or symbols are used, the prescription order will be verified with the prescriber before being entered in the pharmacy computer system or filled by the pharmacy. The use of abbreviated medication names (i.e. MTX for methotrexate or EPI for epinephrine) and/or symbols by prescribers and transcribers for medications is discouraged. Prescribers should use preprinted order forms when available to avoid potential confusing abbreviations and/or symbols.

Abbreviation	Potential Problem	Preferred Term(s)
@ (for "at")	mistaken for "2"	Write "at"
Chemical Symbols	not understood	Write full name
Abbreviated Drug Names		Use official generic or trade name
Apothecary Units		Use metric system units
A.S., A.D., A.U., O.S., O.D., O.U.	mistaken for each other	Write "left ear," "right ear," or "both ears," "left eye," "right eye," or "both eyes"
O.D. (for once daily)	interpreted as "right eye"	Write "once daily"
q.o.d. (for every other day)	interpreted as meaning once daily or read as q.i.d.	Write "every other day"
q.d. (for once daily)	read or interpreted as q.i.d.	Write "once daily"
q.n. (for every night)	read as every hour	Write "every night"
q hs. (for every night)		Write "at bedtime"
H.S.	mistaken for half-strength	Write "at bedtime" or "half-strength"
U (for Unit)	read as 0, 4, or CC	Write "unit"
O.J. (for orange juice)	read as O.D. or O.S.	Write "orange juice"
µg (for microgram)	misread as mg	Write "mcg"
MS, MSO ₄ , MgSO ₄	incorrectly interpreted as magnesium sulfate or morphine	Write "morphine sulfate" or "magnesium sulfate"
MTX (for methotrexate)	misread as mitoxantrone	Always spell out drug name
Epi Drip (for epidural drip)	misread as epinephrine drip	Always spell out drug name
sq (for subcutaneous)	the s is read as 5 and the q is read as every	Write "subq"
S.C. (for subcutaneous)	mistaken as SL (sublingual)	Write "subq"
per os	OS read as left eye	Write "by mouth", "orally" or "P.O."
D/C (for discharge)	interpreted as discontinue whatever orders follow (typically discharge meds)	Write "discharge"
i/d (for once daily)	read as T.I.D.	Write "once daily"
IU	mistaken for IV or 10	Write "units"
T.I.W.	interpreted as T.I.D. or twice weekly	Write " 3 times weekly"
Zero after decimal point (1.0mg)	Misread as 10mg	Do not use decimals for whole number doses
No zero before decimal point (.5mg)	Misread as 5mg	Always use a leading 0 before a decimal when the dose unit is <1unit

SOME APPROVED ABBREVIATIONS*

ā ----- before	IV ----- intravenous	PO ----- by mouth
a c ----- before meals	IVPB ---- intravenous piggyback	PR ----- per rectum
ad lib ---- at pleasure		PRN ---- as needed
AM ----- morning	kg ----- kilogram	pwd ----- powder
amp ---- ampule		q ----- every
aq ----- water	L ----- liter	qid ----- four times daily
ASAP --- as soon as possible	lb ----- pound	qs ----- as much as is sufficient
	liq ----- liquid	
b i d ---- twice daily	mcg ---- microgram	R _x ----- prescription
c ----- with	med(s) -- medicine	̄ ----- without
cap(s) --- capsule	mEq ---- milliequivalent	sig ----- let it be labeled
cm ----- centimeter	mg ----- milligram	sol ----- solution
	min ---- minute	STAT --- immediately
d/c ----- discontinue	mL ----- milliliter	SubQ --- subcutaneous
dL ----- deciliter	mm ---- millimeter	supp ---- suppository
DS ----- double strength	mmHg -- millimeters of mercury	syr ----- syrup
D/W ---- distilled water	mmol --- millimole	
	mOsm -- milliosmol	tab(s) --- tablet
elix ----- elixir	ng ----- nanogram	tbsp ---- tablespoonful
ETT ---- endotracheal tube	NG ----- nasogastric	tid ----- three times daily
Eq ----- equivalent	nka ----- no known allergies	tinc ---- tincture
ext ----- extract	NPO ---- nothing by mouth	TPN ---- total parenteral nutrition
	N & V --- nausea & vomiting	tsp ----- teaspoonful
fl ----- fluid		Ung ----- ointment
g ----- gram	oz ----- ounce	W/O ---- without
gr ----- grain		wt ----- weight
glt ----- drop		x ----- times
HR ----- hour	̄ ----- after	
IG ----- immune globulin	pc ----- after meals	
IM ----- intramuscular	PM ----- afternoon	
IUD ----- intrauterine device	PPD ---- purified protein derivative	

***A complete list of Approved Abbreviations for each of the Medical Centers is available by contacting UWMC Transcription Services or HMC Patient Data Services. See facing page for a table of some dangerous abbreviations to avoid (Table originally adapted from: Davis NM. 8,600 medical abbreviations: convenience at the expense of communications and safety. Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006: Neil M. Davis Associates; 1993.)**