

DO NOT USE : Dangerous Abbreviations, Symbols, Dose Designations

UNACCEPTABLE SYMBOL/DOSE EXPRESSION	INTENDED MEANING	MISINTERPRETATION	RECOMMENDATION
QD, qd, OD, od	Every day	Mistaken as qid or right eye	Write out “daily”
QOD, qod, eod	Every other day	Mistaken for QD or QID	Write out “every other day”
U, u, iu, IU	Units or international units	Next to a number, a U can look like a 0, resulting in a tenfold increase in dose	Write out “units”
.x	Leading decimal point	Decimal point can be missed, resulting in a tenfold increase in dose.	Always use a leading zero (eg. 0.x mg)
x.0	Trailing zero	Decimal point can be missed, resulting in a tenfold increase in dose.	Do not use a trailing zero (eg. x mg)
SL	Sublingual	Misunderstood for SC	Write out “sublingual”
SC, SQ or sub q	Subcutaneous	Misunderstood for SL	Use “subcut” or subcutaneous
AU, AS, AD	Both ears, left ear, right ear	Mistaken for OU, OS or OD	Write out full meaning
OU, OS, OD	Both eyes, left eye, right eye	Mistaken for AU, AS, AD or once daily	Write out full meaning
Abbreviated drug names* (Eg. AZT, CPZ, HCTZ, MSO4)		May be mistaken for other drugs	Write out drug name in full
ug, µg	Microgram	Mistaken for mg	Write out “microgram” or “mcg”
D/C	Discharge	Mistaken for “discontinue”	Write out “discharge”
cc	Cubic Centimetre	Mistaken for “u” (units)	Use mL or “millilitre”
@	at	Mistaken for “2” (two) or “5” (five)	Write out “at”
> <	Greater than Less than	Mistaken for “7” (seven) or the letter “L” Confused with each other	Write out “greater than”/ “more than” or “less than”/“lower than”

*Common abbreviations for elements are acceptable if clearly written (Eg. K, Na, Cl, Zn, Mg, Fe, Ca)

Source: Institute for Safe Medication Practices Canada

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