

# MEDICAL ABBREVIATIONS AND DO NOT USE ABBREVIATIONS LIST

## ABBREVIATIONS RELATING TO THE FORMS OF MEDICATIONS

amp	ampule
aq	water
c	with
cap	capsule
comp	compound
elix	elixir
ext	extract
gtts	drops
IM	intramuscular
IV	intravenous
liq	liquid
O <sub>2</sub>	oxygen
OD	orally disintegrating tablet
PRN	as needed
SL	sublingual
SW, SC, sub q	subcutaneous
SR 16mg	sustained release
supp	suppository
syr	syrup
tab	tablet
tinct	tincture
ung	ointment

## ABBREVIATIONS RELATING TO TIME OF MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION

a	before
ac	before meals
ad lib	freely, as desired
am	morning
h,hr	hour
hs	at bedtime
p	after
pc	after meals
pm	afternoon
PRN	when necessary, as needed
stat	immediately
ud	as directed
q	each, every
qh	every hour
q2h	every two hours
q3h	every three hours
q4h	every 4 hours
qam	every morning
qd	daily (Note: qd is on the "Do Not Use Abbreviations" list; write out daily instead)
bid	two times daily
tid	three times daily
qid	four times daily
qod	every other day (Note: qod is on the "Do Not Use Abbreviations" list; write every other day instead.)

## ABBREVIATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH PRESCRIPTION DIRECTIONS

ad lib	as desired
AD	right ear
AL	left ear
AU	both ears
NG	nasogastric
NPO	nothing by mouth
OD	right eye
OS	left eye
OU	both eyes
PO	by mouth
PRN	as needed
top	topical
QS	as much as required
R	rectal
s	without
Sig	directions for use
SL	sublingual

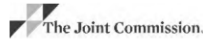
## ABBREVIATIONS RELATING TO INJECTION SITES

LB	Left Buttock
RB	Right Buttock
LA	Left Arm
RA	Right Arm
LT	Left Thigh
RT	Right Thigh
LS	Left Abdomen
RS	Right Abdomen



Effective Date: June 2019

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## Official “Do Not Use” List

- This list is part of the Information Management standards
- Does not apply to preprogrammed health information technology systems (i.e. electronic medical records or CPOE systems), but remains under consideration for the future

Organizations contemplating introduction or upgrade of such systems should strive to eliminate the use of dangerous abbreviations, acronyms, symbols and dose designations from the software.

### Official “Do Not Use” List

Do Not Use	Potential Problem	Use Instead
U, u (unit)	Mistaken for “o” (zero), the number “4” (four) or “cc”	Write “unit”
IU (International Unit)	Mistaken for IV (intravenous) or the number 10 (ten)	Write “International Unit”
Q.D., QD, q.d., qd (daily)	Mistaken for each other	Write “daily”
Q.O.D., QOD, q.o.d., qod (every other day)	Period after the Q mistaken for “I” and the “O” mistaken for “I”	Write “every other day”
Trailing zero (X.0 mg)* Lack of leading zero (.X mg)	Decimal point is missed	Write X mg Write o.X mg
MS	Can mean morphine sulfate or magnesium sulfate	Write “morphine sulfate” Write “magnesium sulfate”
MSO <sub>4</sub> and MgSO <sub>4</sub>	Confused for one another	

\* Applies to all orders and all medication-related documentation that is handwritten (including free-text computer entry) or on pre-printed forms.

**\*Exception:** A “trailing zero” may be used only where required to demonstrate the level of precision of the value being reported, such as for laboratory results, imaging studies that report size of lesions, or catheter/tube sizes. It may not be used in medication orders or other medication-related documentation.

### Development of the “Do Not Use” List

In 2001, The Joint Commission issued a *Sentinel Event Alert* on the subject of medical abbreviations. A year later, its Board of Commissioners approved a National Patient Safety Goal requiring accredited organizations to develop and implement a list of abbreviations not to use. In 2004, The Joint Commission created its “Do Not Use” List to meet that goal. In 2010, NPSG.02.02.01 was integrated into the Information Management standards as elements of performance 2 and 3 under IM.02.02.01.

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# FACT SHEET

### For more information

- Contact the Standards Interpretation Group at 630-792-5900.
- Complete the [Standards Online Question Submission Form](#).



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