



**THE QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL**  
**The “Do Not Use” List aka ISMP’s List of Error-Prone Abbreviations, Symbols, and Dose Designations**

<b>Abbreviation to be avoided</b>	<b>Intended Meaning</b>	<b>Potential Problem</b>	<b>Preferred Term</b>
µg	Microgram	Mistaken for mg (milligrams) resulting in one thousand fold dosing overdose.	Write “mcg”
IU	International unit	Mistaken for IV (intravenous) or 10 (ten).	Use “international unit”
A.S., A.D., A.U.	Latin abbreviation for left, right, or both ears.	Mistaken for each other (e.g., AS for OS, AD for OD, AU for OU, etc.)	Use “left ear,” “right ear” or “both ears;”
OD, OS, OU	Latin abbreviation for right eye, left eye, each/both eye(s)	Mistaken as AD, AS, AU (right ear, left ear, each ear)	Use “right eye,” “left eye,” or “each eye” or “both eyes”
BT	Bedtime	Mistaken as “BID” (twice daily)	Use “bedtime”
cc	Cubic centimeters	Mistaken as “u” (units)	Use “mL”
D/C	Discharge or discontinue	Interpreted as discontinue whatever medications follow (typically discharge medications).	Write “discharge”
IJ	Injection	Mistaken as “IV” or “intrajugular”	Use “injection”
IN	Intranasal	Mistaken as “IM” or “IV”	Use “intranasal” or “NAS”
H.S. or hs	half-strength or Latin abbreviation for bedtime	Mistaken for either half strength or hour of sleep (at bedtime). q.H.S. mistaken for every hour. All can result in a dosing error	Use “half-strength” or “at bedtime”
o.d. or OD	Once daily	Mistaken as “right eye” (OD-oculus dexter), leading to oral liquid medications administered in the eye	Use “daily”
OJ	Orange juice	Mistaken as OD or OS (right or left eye); drugs meant to be diluted in orange juice may be given in the eye	Use “orange juice”
Per os	By mouth, orally	The “os” can be mistaken as “left eye” (OS-oculus sinister)	
q.d., Q.D., q.o.d., Q.O.D.	Latin abbreviation for once daily and every other day	Mistaken for each other or as q.i.d. The period after the Q can be mistaken for an “I” and the “O” can be mistaken for “I.”	Use “daily” or “every other day”



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Qhs, qhs, qn	Nightly at bedtime	Mistaken as “qhr” or every hour	Use “nightly”
q1d	Daily	Mistaken as q.i.d. (four times daily)	Use “daily”
q6PM, etc.	Every evening at 6 PM	Mistaken as every 6 hours	Use “daily at 6 PM” or “6 PM daily”
SC, SQ, sub q	Subcutaneous	SC mistaken as SL (sublingual); SQ mistaken as “5 every;” the “q” in “sub q” has been mistaken as “every” (e.g., a heparin dose ordered “sub q 2 hours before surgery” misunderstood as every 2 hours before surgery)	Use “subcut” or “subcutaneously”
ss	Sliding scale (insulin) or ½ (apothecary)	Mistaken as “55”	Spell out “sliding scale;” use “one-half” or “½
SSRI SSI	Sliding scale regular insulin Sliding scale insulin	Mistaken as selective-serotonin reuptake inhibitor Mistaken as Strong Solution of Iodine (Lugol's)	Spell out “sliding scale (insulin)”
i/d	One daily	Mistaken as “tid”	Use “1 daily”
T.I.W.	Three times a week	Mistaken for three times a day or twice weekly resulting in an overdose.	Write “3 times weekly” or “three times weekly”

Abbreviation to be avoided	Intended Meaning	Potential Problem	Preferred Term
U or u**	Unit	Mistaken as the number 0 or 4, causing a 10-fold overdose or greater (e.g., 4U seen as “40” or 4u seen as “44”). Mistaken as “cc” so dose given in volume instead of units (e.g., 4u seen as 4cc)	Use “unit”
UD	As directed (“ut dictum”)	Mistaken as unit dose (e.g., diltiazem 125 mg IV infusion “UD” misinterpreted as meaning to give the entire infusion as a unit [bolus] dose	Use “as directed”



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<b>Dose Designations and Other Information</b>	<b>Intended Meaning</b>	<b>Misinterpretation</b>	<b>Correction</b>
Trailing zero after decimal point (e.g., 1.0 mg)*	1 mg	Mistaken as 10 mg if the decimal point is not seen	Do not use trailing zeros for doses expressed in whole numbers
“Naked” decimal point (e.g., .5 mg)**	0.5 mg	Mistaken as 5 mg if the decimal point is not seen	Use zero before a decimal point when the dose is less than a whole unit

<b>Dose Designations and Other Information</b>	<b>Intended Meaning</b>	<b>Misinterpretation</b>	<b>Correction</b>
Abbreviations such as mg. or mL. with a period following the abbreviation	mg mL	The period is unnecessary and could be mistaken as the number 1 if written poorly	Use mg, mL, etc. without a terminal period
Drug name and dose run together (especially problematic for drug names that end in “l” such as Inderal 40 mg; Tegretol 300 mg)	Inderal 40 mg Tegretol 300 mg	Mistaken as Inderal 140 mg  Mistaken as Tegretol 1300 mg	Place adequate space between the drug name, dose, and unit of measure
Numerical dose and unit of measure run together (e.g. 10mg, 100mL)	10 mg 100 mL	The “m” is sometimes mistaken as a zero or two zeros, risking a 10- to 100-fold overdose	Place adequate space between the dose and unit of measure
Large doses without properly placed commas (e.g., 100000 units; 1000000 units)	100,000 units 1,000,000 units	100000 has been mistaken as 10,000 or 1,000,000; 1000000 has been mistaken as 100,000	Use commas for dosing units at or above 1,000, or use words such as 100 “thousand” or 1 “million” to improve readability



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<b>Drug Name Abbreviations</b>	<b>Intended Meaning</b>	<b>Misinterpretation</b>	<b>Correction</b>
ARA A	Vidarabine	Mistaken as cytarabine (ARA C)	Use complete drug name
AZT	Zidovudine (Retrovir)	Mistaken as azathioprine or aztreonam	Use complete drug name
CPZ	Compazine (prochlorperazine)	Mistaken as chlorpromazine	Use complete drug name
DPT	Demerol-Phenergan-Thorazine	Mistaken as diphtheria-pertussis-tetanus (vaccine)	Use complete drug name
HCl	hydrochloric acid or hydrochloride	Mistaken as potassium chloride (The “H” is misinterpreted as “K”)	Use complete drug name
HCTZ	hydrochlorothiazide	Mistaken as hydrocortisone (seen as HCT250 mg)	Use complete drug name
MgSO <sub>4</sub> **	magnesium sulfate	Mistaken as morphine sulfate	Use complete drug name
MS, MSO <sub>4</sub> **	morphine sulfate	Mistaken as magnesium sulfate	Use complete drug name
MTX	methotrexate	Mistaken as mitoxantrone	Use complete drug name
NoAC	novel/new oral anticoagulant	No anticoagulant	Use complete drug name
PCA	procainamide	Mistaken as patient controlled analgesia	Use complete drug name
PTU	propylthiouracil	Mistaken as mercaptopurine	Use complete drug name
TAC	triamcinolone	Mistaken as tetracaine, Adrenalin, cocaine	Use complete drug name
TNK	TNKase	Mistaken as “TPA”	Use complete drug name



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<b>Symbols</b>	<b>Intended Meaning</b>	<b>Misinterpretation</b>	<b>Correction</b>
Φ or ø	zero, null sign	Mistaken as numerals 4, 6, 8, and 9	Use 0 or zero, or describe intent using whole words
	tissue plasminogen activator, Activase (alteplase)	Mistaken as TNKase (tenecteplase), or less often as another tissue plasminogen activator, Retavase (retaplase)	
ZnSO4	zinc sulfate	Mistaken as morphine sulfate	Use complete drug name
<b>Stemmed Drug Names</b>	<b>Intended Meaning</b>	<b>Misinterpretation</b>	<b>Correction</b>
“Nitro” drip	nitroglycerin infusion	Mistaken as sodium nitroprusside infusion	
“NorfloX”	norfloxacin	Mistaken as Norflex	
“IV Vanc”	intravenous vancomycin	Mistaken as Invanz	
<b>Symbols</b>	<b>Intended Meaning</b>	<b>Misinterpretation</b>	<b>Correction</b>
x3d	For three days	Mistaken as “3 doses”	Use “for three days”
> and <	More than and less than	Mistaken as opposite of intended; mistakenly use incorrect symbol; “< 10” mistaken as “40”	Use “more than” or “less than”
/ (slash mark)	Separates two doses or indicates “per”	Mistaken as the number 1 (e.g., “25 units/10 units” misread as “25 units and 110” units)	Use “per” rather than a slash mark to separate doses
@	At	Mistaken as “2”	Use “at”
&	And	Mistaken as “2”	Use “and”
+	Plus or and	Mistaken as “4”	Use “and”
°	Hour	Mistaken as a zero (e.g., q2° seen as q20)	Use “hr,” “h,” or “hour”

Source: ISMP’s List of Error-Prone Abbreviations, Symbols, and Dose Designations. <https://www.ismp.org/tools/errorproneabbreviations.pdf>. Accessed April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.