

Accreditation: Patient Safety Bulletin of the Week

February 2022: **Dangerous Abbreviations**

NTHSSA list of "Do Not Use" Abbreviations, Symbols, and Dose Designations

Abbreviation	Intended Meaning	Problem/ Do Not Use	Correction
U	Unit	Mistaken for "0", "4", or cc	Use "unit"
IU	International unit	Mistaken for "IV", or "10"	Use "unit"
Abbreviations for drug names		Misinterpreted because of similar abbreviations for multiple drugs	Do not use abbreviate drug names
QD QOD	Every day Every other day	QD and QOD have been mistaken for each other or "qid". The Q has also been misinterpreted as "2"	Use "daily" and "every other day"
OD	Every day	Mistaken for "right eye" (OD = oculus dexter)	Use "daily"
OS, OD, OU	Left eye, right eye, both eyes	May be confused with one another	Use "left eye", "right eye" or "both eyes"
D/C	Discharge	Interpreted as "discontinue whatever medications follow" (typically discharge medications)	Use "discharge"
cc	Cubic centimeter	Mistaken for "U" (units)	Use "mL" or "milliliter"
µg	Microgram	Mistaken for "mg" (milligram) resulting in one thousand-fold overdose	Use "mcg"
Symbol	Intended Meaning	Potential Problem	Correction
@	At	Mistaken for "2" (two) or "5" (five)	Use "at"
> <	Greater than Less than	Mistaken for "7" (seven) or the letter "L" Confused with each other	Use "greater than" / "more than" or "less than"/"lower than"
Dose Designation	Intended Meaning	Potential Problem	Correction
Trailing zero	X.0 mg	Decimal point is overlooked resulting in 10-fold dose error	Never use a zero by itself after a decimal point. Use "Xmg"
Lack of leading zero	.Xmg	Decimal Point is overlooked resulting in 10-fold dose error	Always use a zero before a decimal point. Use "0.X mg"

The "Do Not Use List" is to be applied to all medication-related documentation, either handwritten or entered as text into a computer.

Where does the list of 'Do Not Use' abbreviations come from?

The NTHSSA has adopted the Institute of Safe Medication Practices (ISMP) Canada's "Do Not Use List."

The list can be found at: www.ismp-canada.org/dangerousabbreviations.htm

NTHSSA Pharmacy Departments perform quarterly audits of medication orders for Do-Not-Use Abbreviations

Read the Dangerous Abbreviations Policy on OurNTHSSA.ca