



National Patient Safety Initiative

Forbidden abbreviations and prescribing practices at UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside

This table lists abbreviations and prescribing practices that cannot be used in medication orders or medication-related documents, including history and physical, progress note, discharge summary, and nursing documentation. The Joint Commission bans the use of these abbreviations and prescribing practices.

 DO NOT USE	 USE	WHY
"u" for units	Write out "unit." Also, add a space between the number and letter "u" when writing (for example, "4 units" and not "4units").	The "u" can be misinterpreted as a "0" and may lead to a tenfold overdose.
"μ" or "μg" to indicate "micrograms"	Use "mcg" or write out the word "micrograms."	Using the "μ" or "μg" may lead to an overdose if it is misinterpreted to mean milligrams.
"MS" or "MSO4" for morphine	Write out "morphine."	"MS" or "MSO4" may be confused with "MgSO4" or magnesium sulfate.
"MgSO4" for magnesium sulfate	Write out "magnesium sulfate."	"MgSO4" can be confused with "MS" and "MSO4."
Leading decimal points	Use a leading zero before a decimal point.	This practice will prevent "0.5 mg" from being misread as "5 mg."
Zeroes after a decimal point	Write "1 mg" rather than "1.0 mg."	An order for "1.0 mg" may be misread as "10 mg" because the decimal point may be easily missed or not show up.
"IU" for international units	Write out "international units."	"IU" can be misread as "IV."
"QOD" for every other day	Write out "every other day."	"QOD" can be misinterpreted as "QD" (daily) or "QID" (four times daily) if the "O" or "D" is poorly written.
"QD" for every day	Write out "every day" or "daily."	"QD" can be confused with "QOD" or "QID" if poorly written.