



DANGEROUS ABBREVIATIONS – Not accepted in orders or medication-related documents

The following abbreviations have been **REMOVED** from The University Hospital Official Abbreviation List because they have the potential to jeopardize patient safety by being misunderstood, resulting in medication errors.

October 2003 forward:

Abbreviation	Intended Meaning	Misinterpretation	Preferred Practice
U or u	unit	Read as a zero (0) or a four (4), causing a 10-fold overdose or greater (4U seen as "40" or 4u seen as "44").	Write "units"
IU	international unit	Misread as "IV" (intravenous) or 10 (ten)	Write "International Unit"
qd or QD od or OD qod or QOD	once daily every other day	Misinterpreted as "right eye" (OD - oculus dexter, causing administration of oral medications in the eye). Period after Q or "O" can be mistaken for "I"	Write "daily" Write "every other day"
Trailing Zero (X.0mg); Lack of Leading Zero (.Xmg)		Decimal point is missed	Remember, " <u>Always lead, never follow</u> " Always write a leading Zero before a decimal point (0.X mg) and never write a Zero by itself after a decimal point (X mg)
MS MSO₄ MgSO₄	magnesium sulfate or morphine sulfate	Confused for one another – can mean morphine sulfate or magnesium sulfate	Write "magnesium Sulfate" or "morphine sulfate"
T.I.W.	three times a week	Mistaken for three times a day or twice a week resulting in an overdose	Write "3 times weekly" or "three times weekly"
HCl	hydrochloric acid	Mistaken for KCl – potassium chloride	Write "hydrochloric acid"
B	Both	Idiosyncratic – may not be familiar to staff	Write "both"

Beginning April 2005, these are also prohibited:

µg, mcg or mcgm	microgram	Mistaken for "mg" resulting in one thousand-fold dosing overdose.	Write "microgram"
Hs or qhs	nightly at bedtime	Misread as every hour.	Use "nightly" or "at bedtime"
SC, SQ or sq	subcutaneous	Mistaken as SL for sublingual, or "5 every".	Write "subcut" or "subcutaneous"
cc	cubic centimeter	Misread as "U" (units)	Write "mL"
AS, AD,AU or OS, OD,OU	AS for OS AD for OD AU for OU	Mistaken for one-another	Write: "left ear," "right ear," or "both ears;" "left eye," "right eye," or "both eyes"
< or >	Less than, more than	May be misinterpreted or confused with one-another	Write "less than" or "more than"