

Common Medical Abbreviations

ABG	arterial blood gas	mEq	milliequivalent
a.c.	before meals	mg	milligram
ADL	activities of daily living	mcg	microgram
ad lib	as desired	ml	milliliter
AP	anterior – posterior	mm	millimeter
A&P	anterior and posterior	NPO	nothing by mouth
ASA	aspirin	NS	normal saline
ASHD	arteriosclerotic heart disease	NSAID	nonsteroidal anti inflammatory drugs
AV	arteriovenous, atrioventricular	OTC	over the counter
b.i.d.	twice a day	OU	each eye
bpm	beats per minute	oz	ounce
Ā	with	p.c.	after meals
CAD	coronary artery disease	PERRLA	pupils equal, round, reactive to light and accommodation
CBC	complete blood count	P.O.	by mouth
CHF	congestive heart failure	prn	as-needed, whenever necessary
cm	centimeter	q	every
C/O	complains of	qhr	every hour
C&S	culture and sensitivity	q2hr	every 2 hours
CSF	cerebrospinal fluid	q.i.d.	four times a day
CT	computed tomography	RLQ	right lower quadrant
cu	cubic	R/O	rule out
DIC	disseminated intravascular coagulation	ROM	range of motion
Dx	diagnosis	RUQ	right upper quadrant
FUO	fever of undetermined origin	Rx	prescription
g, gm	gram	̄	without
gr	grain	subq	subcutaneous
gt, gtt	drop, drops	SL	sublingual
hs	at bedtime, hour of sleep	SOB	short of breath
HTN	hypertension	̄s	one-half
Hx	history	stat	immediately
IM	intramuscular	Sx	symptoms
IV	intravenous	T&C	type and crossmatch
kg	kilogram	t.i.d.	three times a day
KVO	keep vein open	TPR	temperature, pulse, respirations
KUB	kidneys, ureters, and bladder	TO	telephone order
L	liter	tsp	teaspoon
lb	pound	UA	urinalysis
I&O	intake and output	URI	upper respiratory infection
LLQ	left lower quadrant	UTI	urinary tract infection
LUQ	left upper quadrant	VO	verbal order
m	meter, minim	WNL	within normal limits

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Household/Apothecary/Metric Equivalents

Household		Apothecary		Metric
Volume				
—	=	15-16 minims	=	1 milliliter(ml)*
1 tsp	=	1 fld. dram	=	4-5 ml
1 Tbs	=	3-4 fld. drams	=	15-16 ml
2 Tbs	=	1 fld. ounce	=	30 ml
1 cup	=	8 fld. ounces	=	240 ml
1 pint	=	16 fld. ounces	=	480 ml
1 quart	=	32 fld. ounces	=	960 ml
Weight				
—	=	1 grain	=	60-65 mg
—	=	15-16 grains	=	1 gram
—	=	1 dram	=	4 grams
2.2 pounds	=	—	=	1 kg
Length				
1 inch	=	—	=	2.54 cm
39.37 inches	=	—	=	1 meter

**ml and cc are equivalent*

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JCAHO "Do Not Use" Abbreviations

Official "Do Not Use" List¹

Do Not Use	Potential Problems	Use Instead
U (for unit)	Mistaken as zero, the number "4" (four) or "cc"	Write "unit"
IU (for international unit)	Mistaken as IV (intravenous) or the number "10" (ten)	Write "International Unit"
Q.D., QD, q.d., qd (daily) Q.O.D., QOD, q.o.d., qod (every other day)	Mistaken for each other The period after the Q can be mistaken for an "I" and the "O" can be mistaken for "I"	Write "daily" and "every other day"
Trailing zero (X.0 mg) Lack of leading zero (.X mg)	Decimal point is missed	Never write a zero by itself after a decimal point (X mg), and always use a zero before a decimal point (0.X mg)
MS MSO ₄ and MgSO ₄	Confused for one another Can mean morphine sulfate or magnesium sulfate	Write "morphine sulfate" or "magnesium sulfate"

¹Applies 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.

Additional Abbreviations, Acronyms and Symbols

Possible future "Do Not Use" abbreviations, acronyms and symbols.

Do Not Use	Potential Problems	Use Instead
µg (for microgram)	Mistaken for mg (milligrams) resulting in one thousand-fold dosing overdose	Write "mcg" or "micrograms"
H.S. (for 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	Write out "half-strength" or "at bedtime"
T.I.W. (for 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"
S.C. or S.Q. (for subcutaneous)	Mistaken as SL for sublingual, or "5 every"	Write "Sub-Q", "subQ", or "subcutaneously"
D/C (for discharge)	Interpreted as discontinue whatever medications follow (typically discharge meds)	Write "discharge"
c.c. (for cubic centimeter)	Mistaken for U (units) when poorly written	Write "ml" or "milliliters"
A.S., A.D., A.U. (Latin abbreviation for left, right, or both ears)	Mistaken for OS, OD, and OU, etc.	Write "left ear," "right ear" or "both ears"
> (greater than) < (less than)	Misinterpreted as the number "7" (seven) or the letter "L" Confused for one another	Write "greater than" Write "less than"
Abbreviations for drug names	Misinterpreted due to similar abbreviations for multiple drugs	Write drug names in full
Apothecary units	Unfamiliar to many practitioners Confused with metric units	Use metric units
@	Mistaken for the number "2" (two)	Write "at"

An abbreviation on the 'do not use' list should not be used in any of its forms—upper or lower case, with or without periods. For example, if Q.D. is on your list, you can't use QD or qd. Any of those variations are confusing and can be misinterpreted.

Laboratory Values*

Complete Blood Cell Count		Blood Chemistry	
Red blood cells (RBC)	4.25-6.1 x 10/ml (males) 3.6-5.4 x 10/ml (females)	Sodium (Na ⁺)	135-145 mEq/L
White blood cells (WBC)	5000-10,000/mm ³	Potassium (K ⁺)	3.5-4.5 mEq/L
Hemoglobin (Hgb)	13-18 g/dl (males) 12-16 g/dl (females)	Chloride (Cl ⁻)	98-106 mEq/L
Hematocrit (Hct)	45%-54% (males) 37%-47% (females)	Carbon dioxide (CO ₂)	24-32 mEq/L
		Blood urea nitrogen (BUN)	7-25 mg/dl
		Creatinine (Cr)	0.7-1.3 mg/dl (males) 0.6-1.2 mg/dl (females)
		Glucose	70-110 mg/dl
		Calcium (Ca ⁺⁺)	8.5-10.5 mg/dl
		Magnesium (Mg)	1.3-2.1 mg/dl
		Phosphorus	3.0-4.5 mg/dl
		Osmolality	275-295 mOsm/kg
		Bilirubin	
		Direct	0-0.2 mg/dl
		Total	0.2-1.0 mg/dl
		Indirect is total minus direct	
		Amylase	50-150 U/L
		Lipase	0-110 U/L
		Anion gap	8-16 mEq/L
Coagulation			
Platelet	150,000-350,000/ml		
Prothrombin time (PT)	10-14 sec		
Partial thromboplastin time (PTT)	30-45 sec		
Thrombin time (TT)	Control ± 5 sec		
Fibrinogen split products (FSP)	Negative reaction at >1:4 dilution		
Iron/ferritin (Fe) (deficiency)	0-20 ng/ml		
Reticulocyte count	0.5%-1.5% of RBC		
Urine Electrolytes			
Sodium (Na ⁺)	40-220 mEq/L		
Potassium (K ⁺)	25-125 mEq/L		
Chloride (Cl ⁻)	110-250 mEq/L		

*Averages may vary per facility.

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Normal Ranges and Averages

Pulse

Normal Ranges with Averages

Infant:	90-(160)-160 beats per minute
Child:	80-(100)-120 beats per minute
Adult:	Female: 60-(80)-100 beats per minute Male: 55-(75)-95 beats per minute

Respiration

Normal Ranges

Infant:	30 to 70 respirations per minute
Child:	20 to 30 respirations per minute
Adult:	15 to 20 respirations per minute

Blood Pressure

Normal Averages (Systolic/Diastolic)

Newborn:	65-90/30-60 mm Hg
Infant:	(1 year) 65-125/40-90 mm Hg (2 years) 75-100/40-90 mm Hg
Child:	(4 years) 80-120/45-85 mm Hg (6 years) 85-115/50-60 mm Hg
Adolescent:	(12 years) 95-135/50-70 mm Hg (16 years) 100-140/50-70 mm Hg
Adult:	(18-60 years) less than 120/80 mm Hg (60+ years) 120-140/80-90 mm Hg

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Physical Assessment

Appearance

Stage of development, general health, striking features, height, weight, behavior, posture, communication skills, grooming, hygiene

Skin

Color, consistency, temperature, turgor, integrity, texture, lesions, mucous membranes

Hair

Color, texture, amount, distribution

Nails

Color, texture, shape, size

Neurologic

Pupil reaction, motor and verbal responses, gait, reflexes, neurologic checks

Musculoskeletal

Range of motion, gait, tone, posture

Cardiovascular

Heart rate and rhythm, Homans' sign, peripheral pulses and temperature, edema

Respiratory

Rate, rhythm, depth, effort, quality, expansion, cough, breath sounds, sputum production (color and amount), tracheostomy size, nasal patency

Gastrointestinal

Abdominal contour, bowel sounds, nausea, vomiting, ostomy type and care, fecal frequency, consistency, presence of blood

Genitourinary

Urine color, character, amount, odor, ostomy

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Temperature Conversion			
F = C x 9/5 + 32 C = F - 32 x 5/9			
Normal temperature: 98.6° Fahrenheit/37° Celsius (Centigrade)			
°F	°C	°F	°C
70	21.1	94	34.4
75	23.8	95	35
80	26.7	96	35.6
81	27.2	97	36.1
82	27.8	98	36.7
83	28.3	98.6	37
84	28.9	99	37.2
85	29.4	100	37.8
86	30	101	38.3
87	30.6	102	38.9
88	31.1	103	39.4
89	31.7	104	40
90	32.2	105	40.6
91	32.8	106	41.1
92	33.3	107	41.7
93	33.9	108	42.2

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