

RGH Pharmacy E-Bulletin

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A joint initiative of the Patient Services Section and the Drug and Therapeutics Information Service of the Pharmacy Department, Repatriation General Hospital, Daw Park, South Australia. The RGH Pharmacy E-Bulletin is distributed in electronic format on a weekly basis, and aims to present concise, factual information on issues of current interest in therapeutics, drug safety and cost-effective use of medications.

Editor: Assoc. Prof. Chris Alderman, University of South Australia – Director of Pharmacy, RGH

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Recommendations for prescribing terminology (Part 2)

This is the second of two-part series of the RGH e-bulletin that presents a summary of recommendations for safe and acceptable prescribing abbreviations.

Commonly used AND acceptable abbreviations for units of measure	
Abbreviation	Meaning
mL	Millilitre
L	Litre
G	Gram
Mg	Milligram
Mcg (safer to write microgram in full)	Microgram
Unit(s)	International Unit(s)

Abbreviations to be AVOIDED			
Abbreviation to avoid	Intended meaning	Reason for avoiding	Acceptable alternative
ug or µg	microgram	mistaken for milligram when handwritten	write mcg clearly or write microgram
U or U/s	unit or	mistaken for 0	write unit(s)
IU or iu (eg 3 IU)	international unit	mistaken as iv (intravenous) or as 31u (thirty-one units)	write unit(s)
No zero before decimal point (eg .5mg)	0.5mg	Misread as 5mg	Write 0.5mg or write 500microgram
Trailing zero after decimal point (eg 5.0mg)	5mg	Misread as 50mg	Do not use decimal points after whole numbers

Commonly used AND acceptable abbreviations for dose frequency or timing	
Abbreviation	Meaning
Mane	Morning
Nocte	Night
Bd	Twice daily
Tds	Three times a day
Qid	Four times a day
Unit(s)	International Unit(s)
Prn	When necessary
x hourly, q _{xh}	Every x hours
Stat	Immediately

Abbreviations to be AVOIDED			
Abbreviation to avoid	Intended meaning	Reason for avoiding	Acceptable alternative
OD, od or d	Once a day Once daily	Mistaken for twice a day d is easily missed	write mane, nocte or specific time
QD or qd	Every day	Mistaken as qid (four times a day)	write mane, nocte or specific time
M	Morning	Mistaken for n (night)	Write mane
N	Nocte	Mistaken for m (morning)	Write nocte
6/24	Every six hours	Mistaken for six times a day	Write q6h or 6 hourly
1/7	For one day	Mistaken for one week	Write for one day in full
x 3d	For 3 days	Mistaken as for three doses	Write for 3 days in full

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION – CONTACT THE PHARMACY DEPARTMENT ON 82751763 or email: chris.alderman@rgh.sa.gov.au
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