

DO NOT USE LIST

The Ventura County Health Care Agency (VCHA) shall not use the following abbreviations or symbols. This applies to all orders and all medication related documentation that are handwritten (including free text computer entry) or on pre-printed forms. VCHA shall strive towards eliminating the use of dangerous abbreviations, acronyms, symbols, and dose designations from software.

List of Unapproved Abbreviations, Symbols, and Dose Designations

DO NOT USE	Common Error	Use instead
U or u (unit)	Mistaken for "0" (zero), the number "4" (four) or "cc"	Write "unit"
IU (International unit)	Mistaken for "IV" (intravenous) or the number 10 (ten)	Write "International Unit"
Q.D., QD, q.d., qd (daily)	Mistaken for each other	Write "daily"
Q.O.D., QOD, q.o.d., qod (every other day)	Period after the Q for "I" and the "O" mistaken for "I"	Write "every other day"
Trailing zero (X.0 mg) in medication orders or other medication related documentation	Decimal point missed	Write X mg Write 0.X mg
Lack of leading zero (.X mg)		
MS	Could mean morphine sulfate or magnesium sulfate	Write "morphine sulfate"
MSO₄, MgSO₄	Confused for one another	Write "magnesium sulfate"
μG	Mistaken for milligrams	Write out the word "microgram" or use the approved abbreviation "mcg."
AU, AS, AD	Mistaken for each other	Write out "right, left or both ears" or "right, left, or both eyes."
OU, OS, OD		
CC	Mistaken for units when poorly written.	Write "mL" for milliliters.

*EXCEPTION: A "trailing zero" may be used only where required to demonstrate the level of precision of the value being reported (e.g. lab results, imaging studies, catheter/tube sizes).

Other strategies to reduce errors associated with dangerous abbreviations

- Avoid apothecary units and use metric units only.**
- Use the complete drug name.**
 - To avoid confusion, do not abbreviate drug names when communicating medical information
 - Do not use "stemmed" drug names (e.g. "Nitro" drip could be mistaken for sodium nitroprusside).
- Avoid symbols and spell out the word**
- Avoid expressing the strength** of single entity injectable drug products **as a ratio** (e.g. EPINEPHrine 1:10,000). Instead, express the strength as quantity per mL.