

## List of abbreviations used in medical prescriptions

This is a **list of abbreviations used in medical prescriptions, including hospital orders** (the patient-directed part of which is referred to as **sig codes**). This list does not include abbreviations for pharmaceuticals or drug name suffixes such as CD, CR, ER, XT (See *Time release technology* § *List of abbreviations* for those).

Capitalization and the use of full stops are a matter of style. In the list, abbreviations in English are capitalized whereas those in Latin are not.

These abbreviations can be verified in reference works, both recent and older. Some of those works (such as Wyeth 1901) are so comprehensive that their entire content cannot be reproduced here. This list includes all that are frequently encountered in today's health care in English-speaking regions.

Some of these are obsolete; others remain current.

Abbreviations which are deprecated by the Joint Commission are marked in red. Those abbreviations which are deprecated by other organizations, such as the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP) and the American Medical Association (AMA), are marked in orange.

The Joint Commission is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization which offers accreditation to hospitals and other health care organizations in the United States. While their recommendations are not binding on U.S. physicians, they are required of organizations who wish accreditation by the Joint Commission.

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Not recommended for use in the <u>United States</u> by the <u>Joint Commission</u> <sup>[5]</sup>			
Not recommended for use by other organizations, such as the ISMP ( <u>Institute for Safe Medication Practices</u> ) <sup>[6]</sup>			
Abbreviation or symbol	<u>Latin, Greek, or New Latin</u>	<u>English</u>	Possible confusion
aa, āā, ĀĀ	ana	of each	
AAA		apply to affected area	<u>abdominal aortic aneurysm</u>
a.c.	ante cibum	before meals	
a.c.h.s., ac&hs	ante cibum et hora somni	before meals and at bedtime	
a.d.	auris dextra	right ear	A <u>single-storey</u> "a" can be mistaken as an "o" which could read "o.d.", meaning right eye

Abbreviation or symbol	<u>Latin, Greek, or New Latin</u>	<u>English</u>	Possible confusion
ad., add.	adde addatur	add let there be added	
ad lib.	<u>ad libitum</u>	Latin, " <u>at one's pleasure</u> "; as much as one desires; freely	Compare <u>pro re nata</u> , "as needed", which by convention includes an aspect of "up to some maximum". Similarly, compare <u>s.o.s.</u> , <u>q.l.</u> , and <u>q.s.</u>
admov.	admove admoveatur	apply [or] add add; let there be added	
ad us.	ad usum	according to custom	
æq.	æquales	equal	
agit.	agita	<u>agitate</u> (stir or shake)	
alt. d., alt. dieb.	alternis diebus	every other day; on alternate days	
alt. h., alt. hor.	alternis horis	every other hour; at alternate hours	
a.m.	<u>ante meridiem</u>	morning, before noon	
amp.	ampulla	<u>ampule</u> (ampul, ampoule)	
amt		amount	
aq.	aqua	<u>water</u>	
aq. bull.	aqua bulliens	<u>boiling water</u>	
aq. com.	aqua communis	<u>common water</u>	
aq. dest.	aqua destillata	<u>distilled water</u>	

Abbreviation or symbol	<u>Latin, Greek, or New Latin</u>	<u>English</u>	Possible confusion
aq. ferv.	aqua fervens	hot water	
a.l., a.s.	auris laeva, auris sinistra	left ear	"a" can be mistaken as an "o" which could read "o.s." or "o.l", meaning left eye
ATC		around the clock	
a.u.	auris utraque	both ears	"a" can be mistaken as an "o" which could read "o.u.", meaning both eyes
BDS, b.d.s.	bis die sumendum	twice daily	
bib.	bibe	drink	
bis	bis	twice	
b.i.d., b.d.	bis in die	twice daily	<u>AMA style</u> avoids use of this abbreviation (spell out "twice a day")
bis ind.	bis indies	twice a day	
bis in 7 d.	bis in septem diebus	twice a week	
BM		<u>bowel movement</u>	Commonly used in the United Kingdom when discussing blood sugar. From <i>BM Stix</i> – the measurement sticks used for calculating blood sugar; BM being an abbreviation of Boehringer Mannheim. <sup>[7]</sup>
BNF		<u>British National Formulary</u>	
bol.	<u>bolus</u>	as a large single dose (usually <u>intravenously</u> )	
BP, Ph.Br.	Pharmacopoeia Britannica	<u>British Pharmacopoeia</u>	
BS		<u>blood sugar</u>	

Abbreviation or symbol	<u>Latin, Greek, or New Latin</u>	<u>English</u>	Possible confusion
BSA		<u>body surface area</u>	
b.t.		bedtime	mistaken for "b.i.d", meaning twice daily
bucc.	bucca	<u>buccal</u> (inside <u>cheek</u> )	
cap., caps.	capsula	<u>capsule</u>	
cap.	capiat	let him take (let the patient take)	
c.m.	cras mane	tomorrow morning	
c.m.s.	cras mane sumendus	to be taken tomorrow morning	
ċ, c.	cum	with (usually written with a bar on top of the "c")	
cib.	cibus	food	
c.c.	cum cibo	with food [or] <u>cubic centimetre</u>	mistaken for "U", meaning units; also has an ambiguous meaning; use "mL" or "milliliters" (1 cm <sup>3</sup> = 1 mL)
cf.	confer	compare	
c.n.	cras nocte	tomorrow night	
cochl.	cochleare	<u>spoonful</u>	
cochl. ampl.	cochleare amplum	an ample spoonful (a <u>tablespoonful</u> )	
cochl. infant.	cochleare infantis	a small spoonful (a <u>teaspoonful</u> )	

Abbreviation or symbol	<u>Latin, Greek, or New Latin</u>	<u>English</u>	Possible confusion
cochl. mag.	cochleare magnum	a large spoonful (a <u>tablespoonful</u> )	
cochl. mod.	cochleare modicum	a modest spoonful (a <u>dessert-spoonful</u> )	
cochl. parv.	cochleare parvum	a scant spoonful (a <u>teaspoonful</u> )	
colet.	coletur	let it be <u>strained</u>	
comp.	compositus	compound	
contin.	continuetur	let it be continued	
cpt.	capiat	let him take (let the patient take)	
cr., crm		cream	
CST		continue same treatment	
cuj.	cujus	of which	
c.v.	cras vespere	tomorrow evening	
cyath.	cyathus	a <u>glassful</u>	
cyath. vinos.	cyathus vinosus	a <u>wine-glassful</u>	
D, d.	die [or] dosis	<u>days</u> [or] <u>doses</u>	ambiguous meaning, write out "days" or "doses"
D5LR		<u>dextrose 5% in lactated Ringer's solution</u> ( <u>intravenous sugar solution</u> )	

Abbreviation or symbol	<u>Latin, Greek, or New Latin</u>	<u>English</u>	Possible confusion
D5NS		<u>dextrose</u> 5% in <u>normal saline</u> (0.9%) ( <u>intravenous sugar solution</u> )	
D5W, D <sub>5</sub> W		<u>dextrose</u> 5% in <u>water</u> ( <u>intravenous sugar solution</u> )	
D10W, D <sub>10</sub> W		<u>dextrose</u> 10% in <u>water</u> ( <u>intravenous sugar solution</u> )	
da	da	give	
DAW		dispense as written (i.e., no <u>generic substitution</u> )	
DC, dc, D/C, disc		discontinue [or] discharge	ambiguous meaning
decoct.	decoctum	<u>decoction</u>	
det.	detur	let it be given	
dieb. alt.	diebus alternis	every other day; on alternate days	
dil.		dilute	
dim.	dimidius	one-half	
d. in p. æ.	divide in partes æquales	divide into equal parts	
disp.		dispersible [or] dispense	
div.	divide	divide; let it be divided	

Abbreviation or symbol	<u>Latin, Greek, or New Latin</u>	<u>English</u>	Possible confusion
dL		<u>deciliter</u>	
DS		double strength	
d.t.d.	dentur tales doses	give of such doses	
DTO		deodorized tincture of opium	can easily be confused with "diluted tincture of opium," which is 1/25th the strength of deodorized tincture of opium; deaths have resulted due to massive morphine overdose. <sup>[8]</sup> Compare <u>laudanum</u> and <u>paregoric</u> .
DW		<u>distilled water</u> [or] <u>dextrose in water (intravenous sugar solution)</u>	
elix.	elixir	<u>elixir</u>	
e.m.p.	ex modo prescripto	as directed (in the manner prescribed)	
emuls.	emulsum	<u>emulsion</u>	
et	et	and	
EOD		every other day	
ex aq.	ex aqua	in water; with water	
exhib.	exhibiatur	let it be given	
f.	fiat	make; let it be made	
f.h.	fiat haustus	make a draught	
fl., fld.	fluidus	<u>fluid</u> (usually meaning specifically <u>liquid</u> in health care)	

Abbreviation or symbol	<u>Latin, Greek, or New Latin</u>	<u>English</u>	Possible confusion
f.m.	fiat mistura	make a mixture	
f. pil.	fiat pilula	make a <u>pill</u>	
f.s.a.	fiat secundum artem	make according to art	
ft.	fiat	make; let it be made	
g, gm		<u>gram</u> (modern <u>SI</u> symbol is g, not gm)	
garg.	gargarisma	<u>gargle</u>	
gr.	granum	<u>grain</u>	
gtt(s)	gutta(e)	drop(s)	
gutt.	gutta(e)	drop(s)	
H		<u>hypodermic</u>	
h, hr, hor.	hora	<u>hour</u>	
habt.	habeat	let him have	
hor. alt.	hora alternis	every other hour (every second hour; at alternate hours)	
hor. decub.	hora decubitus	at bedtime	
hor. intermed.	horis intermediis	at intermediate hours	
hor. tert.	horis tertiis	every third hour	



Abbreviation or symbol	<u>Latin, Greek, or New Latin</u>	<u>English</u>	Possible confusion
h.s.	hora somni (at the hour of sleep)	at bedtime [or] half-strength	ambiguous (2 meanings, easily conflated); spell out
IBW		<u>ideal body weight</u> (for dosing based on <u>clearance</u> estimation)	
ID		<u>intradermal</u>	
IJ, inj.	injectio	<u>injection</u>	mistaken for "IV", meaning intravenously
i.m., IM		<u>intramuscular</u>	
IN		<u>intranasal</u>	mistaken for "IM", meaning intramuscular, or "IV", meaning intravenously
ind.	indies	daily	
inf.	infusum	<u>infusion</u> (extraction) / <u>intravenous infusion</u>	
i	unus tabuletta	one <u>tablet</u>	
ii	duo tabuletta	two <u>tablets</u>	
iii	tres tabuletta	three <u>tablets</u>	
IO		intraosseous	
IP		<u>intraperitoneal</u>	
IT		<u>intrathecal</u>	mistaken for other abbreviations; spell out
IU		<u>international unit</u>	mistaken for "IV" or "10", spell out "international unit"

Abbreviation or symbol	<u>Latin, Greek, or New Latin</u>	<u>English</u>	Possible confusion
i.v., IV		<u>intravenous</u>	
i.v.p., IVP		<u>intravenous push</u>	
IVPB		<u>intravenous piggyback</u>	
kg		<u>kilogram</u>	
LAS		label as such	
lat. dol.	lateri dolenti	to the painful side	
lb.	libra	<u>pound</u>	
l.c.d.	liquor carbonis detergens	<u>coal tar solution</u>	
lin	linimentum	<u>liniment</u>	
liq.	liquor	<u>solution</u>	
lot.	lotio	<u>lotion</u>	
M., m.	misce	mix	
mane	mane	in the morning	
max.	maximum	<u>maximum</u>	
mcg		<u>microgram</u>	Recommended replacement for "µg" which may be confused with "mg"
mdi		metered dose inhaler	
m.d.u.	more dicto utendus	to be used as directed	

Abbreviation or symbol	<u>Latin, Greek, or New Latin</u>	<u>English</u>	Possible confusion
mEq		<u>milliequivalent</u>	
mg		<u>milligram</u>	
mg/dL		milligrams per deciliter	
MgSO <sub>4</sub>		<u>magnesium sulfate</u>	may be confused with "MSO <sub>4</sub> ", spell out "magnesium sulfate"
midi		at midday	
min.	<u>minimum</u> [or] <u>minim</u> [or] minutum	<u>minimum</u> [or] <u>minim</u> [or] <u>minute</u>	
mist.	mistura	<u>mixture</u>	
mit., mitt.	mitte	number of tablets provided	
mL		<u>millilitre</u>	
mod. præsript.	modo præscripto	in the manner directed	
MS		<u>morphine sulfate</u> or <u>magnesium sulfate</u>	can mean either morphine sulfate or magnesium sulfate, spell out either
MSO <sub>4</sub>		<u>morphine sulfate</u>	may be confused with "MgSO <sub>4</sub> ", spell out "morphine sulfate"
nebul, neb.	nebula	a <u>spray</u> (such as for <u>insufflation</u> )- nebulizer	
NMT		not more than	
noct.	nocte	at night	
non rep.	non repetatur	no repeats (no refills)	

Abbreviation or symbol	<u>Latin, Greek, or New Latin</u>	<u>English</u>	Possible confusion
NPO, n.p.o.	<u>nil per os</u>	nothing by mouth	<u>AMA style</u> avoids use of this abbreviation (spell out "nothing by mouth")
NS		<u>normal saline (0.9%)</u>	
1/2NS		<u>half-normal saline (0.45%)</u>	
NTE		not to exceed	
o 2, o <sub>2</sub>		both eyes	"O <sub>2</sub> " usually means <u>oxygen</u> or <u>oxygen therapy</u>
o.d.	omni die	every day (once daily) (preferred to "qd" in the UK <sup>[9]</sup> )	
o.d.	oculus dexter	right eye	"o" can be mistaken as an "a" which could read "a.d.", meaning right ear, confusion with "omni die"
o.m.	omni mane	every morning	
omn. bih.	omni bihora	every 2 hours	
omn. hor.	omni hora	every hour	
o.n.	omni nocte	every night	
OPD		once per day	
o.s.	oculus sinister	left eye	"o" can be mistaken as an "a" which could read "a.s.", meaning left ear
o.u.	oculus uterque	both eyes	"o" can be mistaken as an "a" which could read "a.u.", meaning both ears
oz		<u>ounce</u>	
p.	perstetur	continue	

Abbreviation or symbol	<u>Latin, Greek, or New Latin</u>	<u>English</u>	Possible confusion
part. æq.	partes æquales	equal parts	
per	per	by or through	
p.c.	post cibum	after meals	
p.c.h.s., pc&hs	post cibum et hora somni	after meals and at bedtime	
Ph.Br., BP	Pharmacopoeia Britannica	<u>British Pharmacopoeia</u>	
Ph.Eur.	Pharmacopoeia Europaea	<u>European Pharmacopoeia</u>	
Ph.Int.	Pharmacopoeia Internationalis	<u>International Pharmacopoeia</u>	
pig./pigm.	pigmentum	paint	
p.m.	<u>post meridiem</u>	evening or afternoon	
p.o.	<u>per os</u>	by mouth or orally	<u>AMA style</u> avoids use of this abbreviation (spell out "orally")
ppt.	præparata	prepared	
p.r., PR	per rectum	<u>rectally</u>	
p.r.n., PRN	<u>pro re nata</u>	as needed	
pt.	perstetur	continue	
pulv.	pulvis	<u>powder</u>	
p.v., PV	per vaginam	<u>vaginally</u>	

Abbreviation or symbol	<u>Latin, Greek, or New Latin</u>	<u>English</u>	Possible confusion
q	quaque	every, per	
q.1 h, q.1°	quaque 1 hora	every 1 hour (can replace "1" with other numbers)	
q4PM		at 4 pm (can replace "4" with other numbers)	mistaken to mean every 4 hours
q.a.d.	quaque alternis die	every other day	
q.a.m.	quaque die ante meridiem	every morning (every day before noon)	
q.d./q.1.d.	quaque die	every day	mistaken for "QOD" or "qds," spell out "every day" or "daily". <u>AMA style</u> avoids use of this abbreviation (spell out "every day")
q.d.a.m.	quaque die ante meridiem	once daily in the morning	
q.d.p.m.	quaque die post meridiem	once daily in the evening	
q.d.s.	quater die sumendus	4 times a day	can be mistaken for "qd" (every day)
q.p.m.	quaque die post meridiem	every evening (every day after noon)	
q.h.	quaque hora	every hour	
q.h.s.	quaque hora somni	every night at bedtime	can be mistaken as "q.h.r." (every hour)
q.i.d.	quater in die	4 times a day	can be mistaken for "qd" or "qod," write out "4 times a day". <u>AMA style</u> avoids use of this abbreviation (spell out "4 times a day")
q.l.	quantum libet	as much as is requisite	
q.n.	quaque nocte	every night	can be mistaken as "q.h." (every hour)

Abbreviation or symbol	<u>Latin, Greek, or New Latin</u>	<u>English</u>	Possible confusion
q.o.d.	quaque altera die	every other day	mistaken for "QD," spell out "every other day". <u>AMA style</u> avoids use of this abbreviation (spell out "every other day")
q.q.	quaque	every; <sup>[10]</sup> each	
q.q.h.	quater quaque hora	every 4 hours	
q.s.	quantum sufficiat (subjunctive), quantum sufficit (indicative), quantum satis	as much as <u>suffices</u> ; a sufficient quantity	
q.s. a.d	add up to		
q.v.	quantum volueris [or] <u>quod vide</u>	at will [or] which see	
QWK		every week	
rep., rept.	repetatur	repeats	
RL, R/L		<u>Ringer's lactate</u>	
Rx, Rx, RX, R, Rp	<u>recipe</u>	take (often effectively a noun meaning "prescription"— <u>medical prescription</u> or <u>prescription drug</u> )	
rep.	repetatur	let it be repeated	
s.	signa	write (write on the label)	
s.a.	secundum artem	according to the art (accepted practice or <u>best practice</u> )	
SC		subcutaneous	"SC" can be mistaken for "SL," meaning sublingual. See also <u>SQ</u>

Abbreviation or symbol	<u>Latin, Greek, or New Latin</u>	<u>English</u>	Possible confusion
sem.	semen	<u>seed</u>	
s.i.d.	semel in die	once a day	used exclusively in veterinary medicine
sig.	signa, signetur	write (write on the label)	
̄s	sine	without (usually written with a bar on top of the "s")	
sing.	singulorum	of each	
SL, s.l.	sub lingua	sublingually, under the <u>tongue</u>	
SOB		<u>shortness of breath</u>	
sol.	solutio	<u>solution</u>	
s.o.s., si op. sit	si opus sit	if there is a need	
s.s., SS	semisse	one-half [or] sliding scale	mistaken for "55" or "1/2"
SSI		sliding scale <u>insulin</u> or sliding scale regular <u>insulin</u>	mistaken to mean "strong <u>solution</u> of <u>iodine</u> " or " <u>selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor</u> ". See also <u>SSRI</u>
SQ		<u>subcutaneously</u>	"SQ" can be mistaken for "5Q" meaning "5 every dose". See also <u>SC</u>
SSRI		<u>selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor</u> [or] <u>sliding scale regular insulin</u>	ambiguous. Do not abbreviate
st.	stet	let it stand (for example, for <u>settling</u> )	
stat	statim	immediately	



Abbreviation or symbol	<u>Latin, Greek, or New Latin</u>	<u>English</u>	Possible confusion
SubQ		<u>subcutaneously</u>	
sum.	sumat [or] sumendum	let him take [or] let it be taken	
supp.	suppositorium	<u>suppository</u>	
susp.	suspensio	<u>suspension</u>	
syr.	syrupus	<u>syrup</u>	
tab.	tabella	<u>tablet</u>	
tal., t.	talus	such	
tbsp		<u>tablespoon</u>	
t.d.s., TDS	ter die sumendum	3 times a day	
t.i.d., t.d.	ter in die	3 times a day	<u>AMA style</u> avoids use of this abbreviation (spell out "3 times a day")
tinct.	tinctura	<u>tincture</u>	
t.i.w.		3 times a week	mistaken for "twice a week"
top.		<u>topical</u>	
TPN		<u>total parenteral nutrition</u>	
tr, tinc., tinct.	tinctura	<u>tincture</u>	
trit.	triturate	<u>grind to a powder</u>	
troch.	trochiscus	<u>lozenge</u>	

Abbreviation or symbol	<u>Latin, Greek, or New Latin</u>	<u>English</u>	Possible confusion
tsp		<u>teaspoon</u>	
U		unit	mistaken for a "4", "0" or "cc", spell out "unit"
u.d., ut. dict.	ut dictum	as directed	
ung.	unguentum	<u>ointment</u>	
USP		<u>United States Pharmacopeia</u>	
vag.	vagine	vaginally	
w		with	
w/a		while awake	
w/f		with food (with meals)	
w/o		without	
X, x		times	
YO, y.o.		years old	
µg		<u>microgram</u>	mistaken for "mg", meaning <u>milligram</u>
@		at	mistaken for "2"; spell out "at"
>		greater than	mistaken for a "7"
<		less than	mistaken for an "L"
lb	libra	<u>pound</u>	

Abbreviation or symbol	<u>Latin, Greek, or New Latin</u>	<u>English</u>	Possible confusion
℥	uncia	<u>ounce</u>	
℥	drachma	<u>dram</u> (drachm)	
℥	scrupulus	<u>scruple</u>	
°		hour	

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#### Currently discouraged practices

- Abbreviating names of drugs
- Using apothecary's units
- Using trailing zeros or not using a leading zero