

**Table 1. Dangerous Abbreviations When Prescribing Medications<sup>‡</sup>**

<b>Abbreviation / Dose Expression</b>	<b>Intended Meaning</b>	<b>Misinterpretation</b>	<b>Correction</b>
<b>AU</b>	Each ear	Mistaken for OU – each eye.	Use “each ear.”
<b>BT</b>	Bedtime	Mistaken as “BID” (twice daily).	Use “bedtime” or “hs.”
<b>Cc</b>	Cubic centimeters	Misread as “U” (units).	Use “ml.”
<b>D or d</b>	Days; doses	Duration of therapy is misunderstood; unclear whether drug should be given for specified number of days or doses.	Use “days” or “doses.”
<b>D/C or d/c</b>	Discharge; Discontinue	Premature discontinuation of medications when D/C (intended as “discharge”) has been misinterpreted as “discontinue” when followed by a list of drugs.	Use “discharge” or “discontinue.”
<b>IU</b>	International unit	Misread as IV (intravenous).	Use “units.”
<b>o.d. or OD</b>	Once daily	Misinterpreted as “right eye” and administration of oral medications in the eye.	Use “daily.”
<b>q.d. or QD</b>	Every day	Mistaken as q.i.d., especially if the period after the “q” or the tail of the “q” is misinterpreted as an “i.”	Use “daily” or “every day.”
<b>qhs</b>	Nightly at bedtime	Misread as every hour.	Use “nightly” or “daily at bedtime.”
<b>q.o.d.</b>	Every other day	Mistaken as q.i.d., especially if the “o” is poorly made and resembles an “i.”	Use “every other day.”
<b>ss</b>	Sliding scale	Mistaken for “55.”	Spell out “sliding scale.”
<b>TIW or tiw</b>	Three times a week	Mistaken as “three times a day.”	Don’t use this abbreviation. Use “three times a week.”
<b>U or u</b>	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”).	Unit has no acceptable abbreviation. Use “unit.”
<b>x3d</b>	For three days	Mistaken for “three doses.”	Use for “three days.”
<b>µg</b>	Microgram	Mistaken for “mg” when handwritten.	Use “mcg.”
Zero after decimal point (e.g., 1.0 mg)	1 mg	Misread as 10 mg if the decimal point is not seen.	Do not use terminal zeros for doses expressed in whole numbers.
No zero before decimal dose (e.g., .5 mg)	0.5 mg	Misread as 5 mg.	Always use a zero before a decimal when the dose is less than a whole unit.

<sup>‡</sup>Taken from *ISMP Medication Safety Alert* newsletter, Institute for Safe Medication Practices, May2, 2001.