

Common Medical Abbreviations

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1. Introduction

- Medical abbreviations are shortened forms of terms used to save time in documentation.
- They must be used carefully because misreading can endanger patients.

2. Categories

- **Dosage and timing:** such as bd for twice daily and prn for as needed.
- **Routes of administration:** such as IV for intravenous and IM for intramuscular.
- **Clinical measures:** such as BP for blood pressure and HR for heart rate.

3. Examples in Practice

- "NPO" means nothing by mouth, used before surgery.
- "Hx" means history and "Dx" means diagnosis.
- "stat" means immediately.

4. Safety Considerations

- Many organisations maintain a "do not use" list to prevent dangerous confusion.
- Abbreviations like "U" for units can be misread and should be written in full.

5. Best Practice

- Use only approved, standardised abbreviations.
- When in doubt, write the term in full to avoid ambiguity.

6. Summary

- Abbreviations improve efficiency but carry risk.
- Standardisation and caution protect patient safety.