

Nursing Abbreviations, Terms, and the Do Not Use List Cheat Sheet

Hey there, friend!

Have you ever seen a patient's chart that looks something like...

Hx: c/o pelvic pain, frequent urination, n/v

POC: r/o UTI, AKI

Rx: Acetaminophen PO 650mg PRN pain, Cipro PO 500mg q12h

...ummm...what?

Remembering all of those abbreviations can be difficult in nursing school.

So I'll walk you through some common nursing abbreviations and terms, PLUS the list of abbreviations that you absolutely cannot use on the clinical floor (it's against The Joint Commission® standards).

Here's what's included:

1. Top 77 Nursing Abbreviations
2. 55 Must Know Nursing Terms
3. The Joint Commission's® "Do Not Use" List

Be sure to print this cheat sheet out and pop it into your lecture or clinical binder so you can always reference it when you need to.

[And if you need more help with nursing fundamentals, be sure to check out this playlist on YouTube.](#)

Thanks for being here, friend! And thanks for allowing me to help you along your nursing school journey.

All my best,
Christina

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TOP 77 NURSING ABBREVIATIONS:

- ABG - Arterial blood gas
- ABX - Antibiotics
- a.c. - Before meals
- ADH - Antidiuretic hormone
- aeb - As evidenced by
- AKI - Acute kidney injury
- AMA - Against medical advice
- b.i.d. - Twice a day
- BM - Bowel movement
- BP - Blood pressure
- BPM - Beats per minute
- BUN - Blood urea nitrogen
- c̄ ("c" with a bar over it) - With
- CABG - Coronary artery bypass graft
- CAD - Coronary artery disease
- CBC - Complete blood count
- CHF - Congestive heart failure
- CKD - Chronic kidney disease
- CNS - Central nervous system
- c/o - Complains of
- CO - Cardiac output
- COPD - Chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder
- CPK - Creatine phosphokinase
- CSF - Cerebrospinal fluid
- CVA - Cerebrovascular accident (stroke)
- CVP - Central venous pressure
- d/c - Discontinue/discharge
- DM - Diabetes mellitus
- Dx - Diagnosis
- EC - Enteric coated
- ECG/EKG- Electrocardiogram
- EEG- Electroencephalogram
- GFR - Glomerular filtration rate
- Hgb- Hemoglobin
- HR- Heart rate
- h.s. - Before bed
- HTN - Hypertension
- Hx- History
- ICP- Intracranial pressure
- IM- Intramuscular
- IV- Intravenous
- IVPB- Intravenous piggyback
- LLQ - Left lower quadrant
- LMP - Last menstrual period
- LOC- Level of consciousness
- LR - Lactated ringers
- LUQ - Left upper quadrant
- MI- Myocardial infarction (heart attack)
- NC- Nasal cannula
- NG - Nasogastric
- NKA or NKDA- "No known allergies" or "no known drug allergies"
- NPO- Nothing by mouth
- NS - Normal saline
- N/V- Nausea/vomiting
- OTC- Over the counter
- PO- By mouth
- POC - Plan of care
- PRN - As needed or when necessary
- PT - Prothrombin time or physical therapy
- PTT - Partial thromboplastin time
- Q- Every
- RBC - Red blood cell
- RLQ - Right lower quadrant
- R/O - Rule out
- ROM - Range of motion
- R/T - related to
- RUQ - Right upper quadrant
- Rx - Prescription
- SC - Subcutaneous

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- SR- Sustained release
- S/S - Signs and symptoms
- Stat - Immediately
- Sx - Symptoms
- t.i.d. - 3 times a day
- UTI - Urinary tract infection
- VS - Vital signs
- WBC - White blood count

Other abbreviations I want to remember

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

55 MUST KNOW NURSING TERMS:

- Ad lib - As desired
- Alopecia - Hair loss
- Ambulate - Walk
- Anuria - Not making urine
- Aphagia - Inability to swallow
- Apnea - Pause in breathing
- Asepsis - Without microorganisms (bacteria, viruses, fungi, etc.)
- Atrophy - Wasting of tissue/muscle
- Auscultate - Listening to heart, lung, and tummy sounds (usually with a stethoscope)
- Bradycardia - Heart rate below 60 beats per minute
- Bradypnea - Respiratory rate below 12 breaths per minute
- Contralateral - On the other side of the body
- Cyanosis - A blue body tint caused by a lack of oxygen
- Diaphoresis - Excessive sweating
- Dysphagia - Difficulty swallowing
- Dysuria - Difficulty urinating
- Edema - Swelling
- Emesis - Vomit
- Epistaxis - Nosebleed
- Eversion - Turning inside out
- Expectorate - Mucus from the lungs
- Febrile - Having a fever
- Gait - How someone walks
- Halitosis - Bad breath
- Hematemesis - Blood in vomit
- Hematuria - Blood in urine

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- Hemiplegia - One sided paralysis
- Hemocult - A test that checks for blood in stool
- Hemoptysis - Coughing up bloody sputum from the lungs
- Hypertrophy - Enlargement
- Inversion - Turn inward
- Isometric - Muscle contraction without shortening
- Lateral - Away from the middle or midline
- Medial - In the middle or on the midline
- Mydriasis - Dilation of the pupil
- Myosis - Constriction of the pupil
- Nocturia - Excessive nightly urination
- Oliguria - Reduced urination
- Orthopnea - Shortness of breath when laying down
- Palpation - Using your hands to feel around the body during an assessment
- Paralysis - Loss of the ability to move or feel
- Paraplegia - Loss of the ability to move or feel in the lower body
- Paresthesia - Feeling of burning or pins and needles
- Paroxysmal - An acute occurrence or recurrence
- Pediculosis - Having lice
- Prone - Laying on the stomach
- Pruritis - Itching
- Purulent - Pus discharge
- Pyrexia - Increased temperature or fever
- Sanguineous - Containing blood
- Serous - Serum-looking or watery-like
- Supine - Laying on the back
- Syncope - Fainting
- Systemic - Impacting the whole body
- Urticaria - Hives

Other terms I want to remember

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

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THE JOINT COMMISSION'S® "DO NOT USE" LIST:

The Joint Commission® has put together a list of medical abbreviations that should not be used.

These abbreviations are likely to be mixed up with other abbreviations and cause confusion between patient care providers.

For the most up-to-date list, go to: <https://www.jointcommission.org/>

Do not use: U or u

- Rationale: It can be confused with "0," "4," or "cc"
- What to use instead: Write out "unit" instead

Do not use: IU

- Rationale: It can be confused with "IV" or "10"
- What to use instead: Write out "International Unit" instead

Do not use: Q.D., QD, q.d., qd

- Rationale: They can be confused with each other or with "00" or "I"
- What to use instead: Write out "daily" instead

Do not use: Q.O.D., QOD, q.o.d., qod

- Rationale: They can be confused with each other or with "00" or "I"
- What to use instead: Write out "every other day" instead

Do not use: MS

- Rationale: It can mean either magnesium sulfate or morphine sulfate
- What to use instead: Write out "magnesium sulfate" or "morphine sulfate"

Do not use: MSO4, MgSO4

- Rationale: They can be confused with each other
- What to use instead: Write out "magnesium sulfate"

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Do not use: Trailing zeros when writing numbers with decimals

- Rationale: They can be confused with adding zeros to a number (ex. "1.0" vs "10")
- What to use instead: Do not include a trailing zero (ex. write "1" instead of "1.0")

Do not use: Leading zero is missing when writing numbers with decimals

- Rationale: They can be confused with a different number (ex. ".2" vs "2")
- What to use instead: Always use a leading zero (ex. write "0.2" instead of ".2")