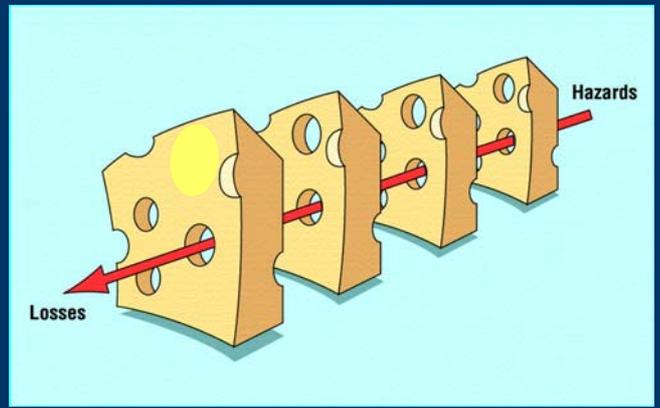


Medication Safety Today



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0.5g or 500 mg?

Writing medication strengths correctly can prevent medication incidents.

The BNF prescription writing guidelines set out the safe and acceptable way of writing strengths and also which abbreviations may be used.

Strength	Acceptable abbreviation
Gram	g
Milligram	mg
Microgram	Must be written in full
Nanogram	Must be written in full
Units	Must be written in full
Millilitre	ml or mL

- Quantities of 1gram or more should be written as 1g, etc.
- Quantities of less than 1gram should be written as milligrams.
- Quantities of less than 1milligram should be written as micrograms.
- The terms cubic centimetres, c.c., or cm³ should not be used.

The following table gives some practical examples of the BNF guidelines.

✓ RIGHT	✗ WRONG
500mg	0.5g
150micrograms	0.15mg
150micrograms	150mcg, 150µg
12units	12u, 12iu
18mL	18cc

Be safe – use the right units

(8)'(9)'(E)'(Z)	=	0N
(0T)'(6)'(L)'(S)'(4)'(1)	=	59A

Allergy !!

Do you know which of these antibiotics can be given to a patient with a penicillin allergy?

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. Amikacin | 6. Tazocin |
| 2. Magnapen | 7. Ciprofloxacin |
| 3. Augmentin | 8. Co-amoxiclav |
| 4. Co-trimoxazole | 9. Seprin |
| 5. Doxycycline | 10. Vancomycin |

Answers at the bottom of the page

- **Anaphylaxis can be fatal**
- **If in doubt check it out!**

Additional inpatient prescription charts
(Kardexes)/supplementary sheets



How many prescription charts and supplementary sheets do your inpatients have at the moment? Are they kept together?

- **All patients should have a main inpatient Medicines Prescription chart (Kardex).**
 - It is good practice to tag or staple the main Kardexes together if there are more than one. They should be labelled as 1 of 2, 2 of 2, etc.
 - It is considered good practice to keep all additional supplementary sheets with the main Kardex, for example, the anticoagulant/INR monitoring sheet (warfarin).
 - Ensure that medicines on additional supplementary sheets are prescribed on the main Kardex. Otherwise, for example, warfarin may be overlooked if it is written up on the anticoagulant/INR monitoring sheet only.



Did you know?



Clopidogrel (Plavix®)

The antiplatelet effect of clopidogrel (Plavix®) has sometimes been overlooked in planning for surgery.

For patients undergoing elective surgery where the antiplatelet effect is not desirable, clopidogrel should be stopped 7 days prior to surgery.



Oral Bisphosphonates

Bisphosphonates are involved in a variety of medication incidents including:



- Confusion between the weekly and daily preparations of alendronic acid and risedronate sodium
- Non-adherence to the specific administration instructions for each product



Available preparations include:

Generic name	Brand name
Alendronic acid	Fosamax, Fosamax Once Weekly
Disodium etidronate	Didronel, Didronel PMO
Risedronate sodium	Actonel, Actonel Once a Week
Sodium clodronate	Bonefos, Loron
Tiludronic acid	Skelid

The administration instructions for these products are complicated, as shown below.

All preparations must be swallowed whole with a full glass of water	Alendronic acid	Disodium etidronate	Risedronate sodium	Sodium clodronate	Tiludronic acid
30min before breakfast	✓		✓ OR		
No food 2hrs before and after dose		✓	✓		✓
No food 1hr before and after dose				✓	
Do not take at bedtime or before rising	✓		✓		
Avoid antacids		✓	✓	✓	✓
Avoid iron/mineral supplements at same time as dose		✓	✓	✓	
Sit or stand upright for at least 30min after dose	✓		✓		

These administration instructions are important to:

- Prevent serious oesophageal reactions
- Allow adequate absorption of the medicines

Information on administration instructions and patient counselling is available in the BNF, product information leaflet or from the pharmacy department.

How can you avoid incidents with oral bisphosphonates?



- Take care to choose the correct product, dose and dose frequency.
- For weekly preparations, specify the day of the week
- Adhere to the administration instructions
- Counsel the patient



Insulin

Insulin

Insulin multidose vials

- Always use an insulin syringe when drawing up insulin.

Safety tip



Separate insulin syringes from all the other syringes and keep them near the drug fridge.

- Multidose vials of insulin are presented as 10ml containing 100 international units per ml.

Safety tip



When prescribing insulin, always spell out 'units' in full. Never abbreviate to 'iu' or 'u'. This can be misread as a zero resulting in a serious, tenfold overdose.

Insulin pens and cartridges

Safety tip



Attach the patient's addressograph to their insulin pen

According to Trust policy, return the patient's own insulin pen on discharge.



Did you know?



Amiodarone injection must be infused in glucose 5%.

It is incompatible with sodium chloride infusion.