

# CRITICAL Incident Learning

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

### DANGEROUS ABBREVIATIONS, SYMBOLS AND DOSE DESIGNATIONS

**Our chart audits have revealed abbreviations used such as OD for overdose, is it okay to use this abbreviation in this context?**

ISMP Canada's [Do Not Use Dangerous Abbreviations, Symbols and Dose Designations](#) is intended to be used when communicating information about medications. The overarching principle of the Do Not Use list is to ensure clear communication. It is recognized that there are many abbreviations used in healthcare and some organizations provide lists of “approved” abbreviations to support use of recognized nomenclature.

The abbreviation “OD” is generally well understood to mean overdose in the context of clinical notes; however if it is possible that the context is not clear, it is always safer to avoid the use of abbreviations and acronyms – if in doubt – spell it out.