

# Module 2: Terms and Tools

*Terminology*  
*Abbreviations*  
*Tools and Supplies*

**Assisted Living Medication Training**



## TERMINOLOGY

Every profession has terms and abbreviations associated with the job. When working as a Med Aide, there is terminology that is often used when assisting persons with medications.

Take time to learn the terminology below:

Absorb	To soak up or take in.
Adverse Drug Reaction	An adverse drug reaction, also called a side effect, is any undesirable experience associated with the use of a medicine in a patient. Adverse events can range from mild to severe. Serious adverse events are those that can cause disability, are life-threatening, result in hospitalization or death, or are birth defects.
Analgesic	Relieves pain without the loss of consciousness.
Angina	Chest pain caused by poor blood supply to the heart muscle.
Antacid	Neutralizes stomach acid.
Antibiotic	Kills or slows down the growth of bacteria.
Anticoagulant	Prevents the blood from clotting.
Anticonvulsant	Controls seizures.
Antifungal	Interferes with the growth of a fungus.
Antihistamine	Dries mucus secretions in the respiratory tract.
Anti-inflammatory	Decreases inflammation.
Antipsychotic	Depresses brain function or corrects chemical imbalance in the brain.
Aphasia	Loss of the ability to speak.
Axilla	The underarm area, a.k.a. the "armpit."
Buccal Tablet	Tablet made to be placed between the cheek and the gum.



Capsule	Hard or soft, soluble containers of a suitable substance, for enclosing a dose of medicine, usually for oral administration.
Cardiac	Having to do with the heart.
Clean	Free of disease causing bacteria.
Colon	The large intestine.
Constipation	Hard bowel movement that is difficult to pass.
Controlled Substance	Drugs that are potentially addictive.
Cream	A water-soluble preparation that is typically applied to the skin. An ointment differs from a cream in that it has an oil base.
Decongestant	Encourages sinuses to drain.
Discontinued	Medications no longer taken by the resident.
Dose	The amount of a drug to be taken.
Duration of Action	The length of time the drug has a pharmacologic effect.
Electrolytes	Basic chemical elements required by the body such as calcium, potassium, and sodium.
Elimination	Excretion of waste products by the skin, kidneys, and intestines. The main route of drug elimination is through the kidneys; other routes include feces, lungs, saliva, sweat, and breast milk.
Elixir	Medication dissolved in alcohol and flavored with sugar.
Elixir, Fluid, Extract	Liquid medication with an alcohol base.
Enteric Coated	Tablet with a special coating that does not breakdown until it reaches the small intestine.
Epidermis	The outer layer of the skin.
Esophagus	A tube-like structure that carries food from the mouth to the stomach.
Eye Ointment	Sterile semi-solid preparation for ophthalmic use only.



Fast-Dissolving Tablet	Tablets that disintegrate and/or dissolve rapidly in the saliva without the need for water.
Fracture	Broken bone.
Gelcap	A capsule formed of a gel material, sometimes gelatin but commonly a synthetic polymer.
Hyperglycemic	High blood sugar level.
Hypertension	High blood pressure
Hypoglycemic	Low blood sugar level or lowers blood sugar level.
Inhale	To breath in.
Inhaler	A device used to provide medication by inhalation.
Instillation	Putting a liquid slowly, drop by drop, onto a body surface or into a body cavity.
Interactions	A situation where drugs interfere or alter each others actions.
Laxative	Promotes bowel movement.
Lotion	Liquid preparation of a drug for external application.
Lozenges	Disc of medication intended to be dissolved inside the mouth.
Medication	Chemical (drug) used to treat or prevent illness or affect body function.
Meniscus	The concave shape of the top of a column of liquid.
Metabolize	To break up into useable substances.
Metric system	A system of measure based on the decimal system.
Narcotic	A drug that alters perception of pain and that with repeated use may result in physical and psychological dependence.
Nebulizer	A device that changes a liquid into a fine spray or mist.



NSAIDs	Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. Reduce inflammation without the use of steroids.
Ointment	A medication preparation that is applied topically. An ointment has an oil base whereas a cream is water-soluble.
Ophthalmic	Pertaining to the eye.
Oral	Having to do with the mouth.
Over-the-counter	OTC. A drug that can be purchased or used without a prescription.
Pharmacist	A licensed medical professional responsible for compounding, labeling, and dispensing prescription drugs.
Polypharmacy	Many drugs.
Rectal	A medication given into the rectum.
Route	The way a drug is put into or onto the body.
Side Effects	Physiologic effects not related to desired drug effects. All drugs have side effects, desirable or undesirable. Even with a correct drug dosage, side effects occur and are predicted.
Solution	Liquid medication in which a drug is evenly dissolved and appears clear.
Spray	Medication given in a fine mist.
Sublingual Tablet	Tablet made to be placed under the tongue.
Suppository	Drug suspended in a substance that melts at body temperature.
Suspension	Liquid medication that requires shaking because settling of drug particles occurs.
Syrup	Medication dissolved in sugar water.
Tablet	A medication, usually mixed with a binder powder, molded and pressed into the form of a tablet, traditionally circular or disk-shaped, but more recently also oblong or differently shaped.



Time-Release Capsule	Coated capsule containing drug particles that dissolve in a predetermined period of time.
Toxicity	The extent, quality, or degree of being poisonous.
Transdermal Patch	Medication applied to the skin and absorbed over a long period of time.
Vaginal Cream	Medicated cream to be applied to the vagina with use of a special applicator.



## ABBREVIATIONS

Inappropriate use of abbreviations combined with poor handwriting can lead to significant medication errors, so use abbreviations on a limited basis, if at all. However, because many other healthcare professionals may use abbreviations in their notations and orders, this list is provided as a reference. If you are unable to interpret or understand an abbreviation, always clarify with the individual that made the notation or order.

Below is an extensive list of common abbreviations. Not all of them will be used where you work, so it is important to confirm the policy in your community on the use of abbreviations. It is recommended that all Med Aides keep a reference sheet of approved abbreviations available in your work area.

<b>A</b>	
$\bar{a}$	Before
ABD	Abdomen
AC	Before eating
AD	Right ear
ad lib	As desired
ADL	Activity of daily living
am	Morning
amb	Ambulate
AS	Left ear
ASAP	As soon as possible
AU	Both ears
<b>B</b>	
BID	Twice a day
BKA	Below the knee amputation
BM	Bowel movement
BP or B/P	Blood pressure



BPM	Beats per minute
BS	Bowel or breath sounds
<b>C</b>	
$\bar{c}$	With
C	Celsius or centigrade
C&S	Culture and sensitivity
CA	Cancer
Ca	Calcium
CAD	Coronary artery disease
CAP	Capsule
CAT	Computerized axial tomography, as in "CAT scan"
CBC	Complete blood count
CBG	Capillary blood gas
CCU	Clean catch urine
CHF	Congestive heart failure
CNA	Certified nurses aide
CNS	Central nervous system
C/O	Complaining of
COPD	Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
CPAP	Continuous positive airway pressure, as in "CPAP machine"
CPR	Cardiopulmonary resuscitation
CSF	Cerebrospinal fluid
CT	Computerized tomography, as in "CT scan"
CVA	Cerebrovascular accident, a.k.a. "stroke"
CXR	Chest X-ray
<b>D</b>	
DAT	Diet as tolerated
DC	Discontinue or discharge
DM	Diabetes mellitus
DNR	Do not resuscitate





DME	Durable medical equipment
DOB	Date of birth
DPT	Diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus
DVT	Deep venous thrombosis or deep vein thrombosis
DX or Dx	Diagnosis
<b>E</b>	
ECG	Electrocardiogram
ECT	Electroconvulsive therapy
ED	Executive director
EMS	Emergency medical services
ENT	Ears, nose, and throat
ETOH	Ethanol, often used in reference to alcohol use/abuse
<b>F</b>	
F	Fahrenheit
FBS	Fasting blood sugar
Fe	Iron
FTT	Failure to thrive
FU	Follow-up
FWB	Full weight bearing
FWW	Front wheeled walker
Fx	Fracture
<b>G</b>	
GI	Gastrointestinal
gr	Grain, 1 grain = 65 mg
gm	Gram
gt or gtt	Drops
GU	Genitourinary
<b>H</b>	
H	Hour
H2O	Water



HA	Headache
HDL	High density lipoprotein
Hgb	Hemoglobin
HO	History of
HOB	Head of bed
HOH	Hard of hearing
HR	Heart rate
HS	At bedtime
HTN	Hypertension
Hx	History
<b>I</b>	
I&O	Intake and output
ID	Identification
IDDM	Insulin dependent diabetes mellitus
IM	Intramuscular
INR	International Normalized Ratio
IPPB	Intermittent positive pressure breathing
IV	Intravenous
<b>L</b>	
L	Left or Liter
LOC	Loss of consciousness or level of consciousness
LPN	Licensed practical nurse
LVN	Licensed vocational nurse, this term is used only in California and Texas
<b>M</b>	
mL or ml	Milliliter
MRI	Magnetic resonance imaging
MRSA	Methicillin resistant staphylococcus aureus
MS	Multiple sclerosis
<b>N</b>	
Na	Sodium



NAS	No added salt
NG	Nasogastric
NKA	No known allergies
NKDA	No known drug allergies
noc	Nighttime
NPO	Nothing by mouth
NS	Normal saline
NSAID	Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs
NT	Nasotracheal
N/V	Nausea and vomiting
NVD	Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea
<b>O</b>	
OD	Right eye
OOB	Out of bed
OS	Left eye
OTC	Over-the-counter
OU	Both eyes
oz	Ounce
<b>P</b>	
$\bar{p}$	After
PC	After meals
PDR	Physicians' desk reference
pm	Afternoon
PO	By mouth
PRN	As needed
PT	Physical therapy or Prothrombin time
<b>Q</b>	
Q	Every (e.g., Q6H = every 6 hours)
QD	Every day
QH	Every hour



Q4H, Q6H, etc.	Every 4 hours, every 6 hours, etc.
QID	Four times a day
QNS	Quantity not sufficient
QOD	Every other day
<b>R</b>	
R	Right
RBC	Red blood cell
RDA	Recommended daily allowance
R/O	Rule out
ROM	Range of motion
RT	Respiratory therapy
Rx	Prescription
<b>S</b>	
s	Without
SL	Sublingual
SNF	Skilled nursing facility
S/O	Significant other
SOB	Shortness of breath
STAT	Immediately
Subq or SQ	Subcutaneous
Sx	Symptoms
<b>T</b>	
TB	Tuberculosis
Temp	Temperature
TIA	Transient ischemic attack
TID	Three times a day
TO	Telephone order
Tx	Treatment
<b>U</b>	



UA	Urinalysis
URI	Upper respiratory infection
US	Ultrasound
UTI	Urinary tract infection
<b>V W X Y Z</b>	
VO	Verbal order
VRE	Vancomycin-resistant enterococcus
WBC	White blood cell or count
W/C	Wheelchair
WNL	Within normal limits
YO	Years old
YTD	Year to date
<b>Misc</b>	
>	Greater than
<	Less than
=	Equal to
#	Number, pounds
"	Inch or second

ALWAYS follow your community policies regarding the use of abbreviations. Never "invent" a new abbreviation.

Remember, it is best to **write words out and avoid the use of abbreviations**. Medical professionals working with assisted living communities should be encouraged to avoid the use of abbreviations. Never guess at the meaning of an abbreviation; verify the meaning with the author.





**Learning Exercise:**  
*Terminology and Abbreviations*





Write the correct complete word(s) for each abbreviation:

AC	
BM	
$\bar{c}$	
BID	
gtt	
DC	
DNR	
PO	
QD	
QH	
QHS	
QID	
QOD	
NKDA	
NSAID	
OD	
OS	
OTC	
Rx	
URI	
UTI	
<	
TID	





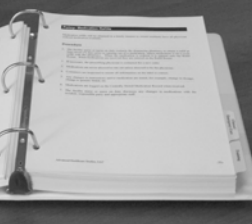


## TOOLS AND SUPPLIES

There are many tools and supplies essential to completing your duties as a Med Aide. On the following pages are photos of common tools and supplies along with a brief description and important notes on the use of each.


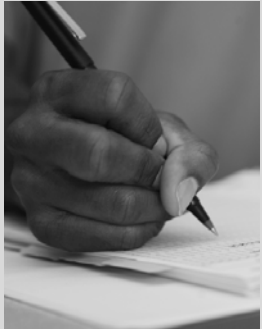

	<p><b>Paper soufflé cups (a.k.a. "med cups")</b> Small paper cups used to temporarily hold medications while pouring medications for a given resident. Used for holding tablets and capsules and other solid forms of medication while it is carried to the resident.</p>
	<p><b>Plastic measuring cups with graduated measurements</b> Used to measure liquids from bottles such as cough syrup, Milk of Magnesia, etc.</p>
	<p><b>Plastic spoons</b> Used for mixing medications such as fiber supplements with juice or water and/or mixing crushed medications with applesauce. Must be stored in a sanitary fashion. Common eating (non-graduated) spoons, such as the one pictured here, should NOT be used to measure a medication such as a liquid or powder.</p>
	<p><b>Pill crusher</b> Device for crushing tablets. Models and designs will vary. DO NOT use for capsules or gelcaps.</p>



	<p><b>Pill cutter</b> Small, handheld device in which one tablet at a time is cut in half.</p>
	<p><b>Gloves</b> Used to protect both resident and staff when assisting with the administration of medications such as eye drops, transdermal patches, and ointments.</p>
	<p><b>Medication cart</b> Used for storage of resident medications. Eye drops, inhalers, nasal sprays, and the like are kept separate from oral medications.</p>
	<p><b>Drug handbook</b> Reference tool used to learn about medications and to check for such information as generic and trade names, possible adverse reactions, interactions between medications, customary dosages, etc.</p>
	<p><b>Policy and procedure manual</b> Company specific guidelines related to expectations for how to handle given situations.</p>





	<p><b>Medication Assistance Record (MAR)</b> A resident-specific documentation record of medications given. Sometimes also called a Medication Administration Record.</p>
	<p><b>Pens</b> Black ink pens for documenting in the resident's medication records. Highlighter pens (yellow) are useful for indicating those medications which have been discontinued or for drawing attention to specific times, etc.</p>
	<p><b>Pill counting tray</b> A Tray used to count tablets/capsules, etc. with a spatula.</p>

