

Medication Labeling

● SKILL SNAPSHOT

Purpose

- Maintains positive identification of every prepared medication and solution from preparation through administration or disposal.

When to use

- Immediately whenever a medication leaves its original labeled container and is not administered at once by the preparer.

Supplies needed

- Standard medication labels; permanent marker; MAR/order; prepared syringe, cup, basin, bag, or container.

● PREP + PATIENT SETUP

- Prepare medications for one patient at a time in a clean, well-lit area.
- Keep original container and order available until labeling is complete.
- Know facility-required label elements and

● VAULT TIP

- If it leaves the original container, the label follows immediately—before your hand reaches for anything else.

● STEP-BY-STEP

1. Hand hygiene; verify patient, medication, concentration, dose, route, time, and expiration before preparation.
2. Label immediately after transferring medication to a syringe, cup, basin, bag, or other container—never “label later.”
3. Include required elements: drug name, strength/concentration, amount/dose, diluent and total volume when relevant.
4. Add route, patient identifiers, preparation date/time, expiration/beyond-use date/time, and preparer initials as policy requires.
5. For continuous/high-alert infusions, label bag, tubing near pump, and distal line/lumen according to policy.
6. Use tall-man lettering, auxiliary warnings, and standardized units where required; avoid unsafe abbreviations.
7. Place label so graduations, contents, manufacturer label, and critical information remain visible.
8. At bedside, compare label with MAR/order and patient identifiers before administration.
9. When more than one preparer is involved, perform a verbal and visual handoff; receiver independently verifies contents.
10. Do not accept an unlabeled syringe/cup or rely on color, location, memory, or cap color. Discard it safely.
11. Remove outdated labels when containers/tubing are changed; never label over conflicting information.
12. Keep label with medication until administration is complete, then document and dispose per policy.

● SAFETY REMINDERS

- Every unlabeled container is considered unknown and must be discarded.
- Label one medication at a time.
- Never prelabel an empty container.
- Color coding cannot replace readable text.

● COMMON MISTAKES

- Relying on syringe location or cap color.
- Labeling after several drugs are prepared.
- Missing concentration or total volume.
- Covering syringe graduations.

● DOCUMENTATION

- Medication administration is charted in MAR.
- Preparation/expiration elements as policy requires.
- Independent verification for high-alert drugs.
- Waste/discard of unknown medication.
- Error/near-miss reporting and notifications.