

Common terminology in medication administration

- Oral (PO) – the patient swallows a tablet or capsule
- Sublingual (SL) – applied under the tongue
- Enteral (NG or PEG) – administered via a tube directly into the GI tract
- Rectal (PR) – administered via rectal suppository
- Inhalation (INH) – the patient breathes in medication from an inhaler
- Intramuscular (IM) – administered via an injection into a muscle
- Subcutaneous – administered via injection into the fat tissue beneath the skin (Note that “subcutaneous” is on ISMP’s recommended list of abbreviations to avoid due to common errors.)
- Transdermal (TD) – administered by applying a patch on the skin
- Capsules. A capsule is an oral medication that's usually swallowed. ...
- Softgels. A softgel is a specific type of capsule, consist of a gelatin based shell surrounding a liquid fill.
- Sprinkle capsules- contain miniature pellets or granules inside an outer shell. They’re designed to be opened, but can be swallowed whole if desired.
- Traditional tablets
- Chewable tablets- tablets that should be chewed first and then swallowed
- Oral disintegrating tablets- tablets that dissolve on the top of the tongue. They shouldn’t be swallowed or chewed.
- Sublingual tablets-pills that are placed under your tongue and broken down by your saliva.
- Effervescent tablets-pills that are placed under your tongue and broken down by your saliva.
- Buccal- work by placing the pill between your gums and the inside of your cheek.
- Caplets are smooth-coated tablets that are shaped like capsules.
- Scored- a tablet with an indentation in and it refers to the breakage of a tablet to attain a desired efficacy dose
- Enteric coated
- Suspensions-include components that do not mix together completely and need to be shaken or mixed before every use as the ingredients will separate and settle to the bottom.
- Solutions-Solutions contain a mixture of components that completely blend together and don’t separate out or settle to the bottom of the container.
- Elixirs- sweetened hydro-alcoholic (water and alcohol) liquids for oral use.
- Syrups-a liquid form of medication that is compounded with a thick, sweet, sticky liquid in which the medication is dissolved.
- Tinctures- a medicine consisting of a substance in a solution of alcohol such as iodine
- Ointments- a semisolid medicinal preparation usually having a base of fatty or greasy material