

Overview: NPSG.03.04.01: Label all medications, medication containers, and other solutions on and off the sterile field in **perioperative and other procedural settings**. Note: Medication containers include syringes, medicine cups, and basins.

Why this standard is important to patient safety

Labeling of medications and other solutions is important because errors, sometimes tragic, have resulted from wrong medications or solutions being administered to patients because the medications or solutions were misidentified. The labeling of all medications, medication containers, and other solutions is a risk-reduction activity consistent with safe medication management.

Elements of Performance

1. In perioperative and other procedural settings both on and off the sterile field, label medications and solutions that are not immediately administered. This applies even if there is only one medication being used.
Note: An immediately administered medication is one that an authorized staff member prepares or obtains, takes directly to a patient, and administers to that patient without any break in the process. Refer to NPSG.03.04.01, EP 5, for information on timing of labeling.
2. In perioperative and other procedural settings both on and off the sterile field, labeling occurs when any medication or solution is transferred from the original packaging to another container.
3. In perioperative and other procedural settings both on and off the sterile field, medication or solution labels include the following:
 - Medication name
 - Strength
 - Quantity
 - Diluent and volume (if not apparent from the container)
 - Expiration date when not used within 24 hours
 - Expiration time when expiration occurs in less than 24 hoursNote: The date and time are not necessary for short procedures, as defined by the hospital.
4. Verify all medication or solution labels both verbally and visually. Verification is done by two individuals qualified to participate in the procedure whenever the person preparing the medication or solution is not the person who will be administering it.
5. Label each medication or solution as soon as it is prepared, unless it is immediately administered.
Note: An immediately administered medication is one that an authorized staff member prepares or obtains, takes directly to a patient, and administers to that patient without any break in the process.
6. Immediately discard any medication or solution found unlabeled.
7. Remove all labeled containers on the sterile field and discard their contents at the conclusion of the procedure.
Note: This does not apply to multiuse vials that are handled according to infection control practices.
8. All medications and solutions both on and off the sterile field and their labels are reviewed by entering and exiting staff responsible for the management of medications.