

# Pharmacy Technician Q & A

Please take a moment to review this information which is intended to refresh some basic concepts that many technicians use on a daily basis.

## CALCULATIONS

- How do I convert metric measures such as milliliters (ml), cubic centimeters (cc) and grams (g) into common household amounts like teaspoons (tsp), tablespoons (tbsp), ounces (oz), pints (pt) and pounds (lb)?**

1 ml = 1 cc	5 ml or 5 cc = 1 tsp	3 tsp = 1 tbsp
~480 ml = 1 pt = 16 oz	30 ml = 1 oz	1000 ml = 1 L (liter)
1 L ≈ 2 pt	1000 g = 1 kg (kilogram)	1 kg = 2.2 lb

- If a patient has a prescription order for 20 ml of medication three times a day for 8 days, how much will they need for the entire order?**

20 ml (or 4 tsp) per dose x 3 doses/day x 8 days = 480 ml or ~1 pt

- A patient has a prescription to apply 1 g of 0.5% ointment to a small rash twice a day. I only have 0.25% ointment in stock so can't I just have them use 2 g twice a day?**

No because the doctor specified a specific strength of the medication. The percentage strength of medication stays the same regardless of how much you use, so 0.25% ointment will still be 0.25% strength even if you use twice as much.

## PHARMACY TERMINOLOGY

- What is the difference between a solution and a suspension?**

A solution is formed when two or more solids or liquids are combined together in a "homogenous" mixture. Homogenous means that the particles of the different solids or liquids are so small that you cannot tell them apart. The particles in a suspension are larger or repel each other so that over time the solids and liquids separate or settle out. This is why it is very important to shake any suspension before using it.

- When a pharmacist calls and says they "Need a copy.", what do they mean?**

It means that their pharmacist wants to transfer a prescription from your pharmacy to theirs.

- What do the "routes" of administration mean and what medications use them?**

Abbreviation	Meaning	Medication Type
Buc	Buccal = in the cheek	Dissolving tablets
IM	Intramuscular = in the muscle	Injections (flu shots)
IV	Intravenous = in the vein	Injections
Opth	Ophthalmic = in the eye	Eye drops
Otic	In the ear	Ear drops
PO	Per oral = by mouth	Tablet, capsules, liquids
PR	Per rectum	Suppositories, some tabs/caps
SL	Sublingual = under the tongue	Dissolving tablets
SQ	Subcutaneous = under the skin	Injections (insulin)

## LAWS & RULES

### 7. Please review the following Frequently Asked Questions regarding Pharmacy Technicians and the law.

QUESTION	ANSWER
Do I have to register with the Board as a technician when I am being trained?	Yes, an individual must have a current Technician Registration in hand before performing the duties of a technician. The registration must be posted at the pharmacy and a technician must notify the Board (by fax or writing) within 15 days of a change of home address or work location.
What should I do if I see someone or I suspect a staff member of stealing medications from the pharmacy stock?	Report your suspicion to the Board office. In fact, the law requires that technicians report suspected violations of any pharmacy law.
What do I do when I am at the cash register helping a customer who is picking up a new prescription?	Notify the pharmacist that Counseling is required on the prescription. Do not substitute notifying the pharmacist by asking the patient (or the person picking up the prescription) if they have questions for the pharmacist. The rule requires that the Pharmacist must personally talk to the patient or the patient's agent. If the patient or patient's agent wants to decline counseling, he/she must decline directly to the pharmacist and not through a technician.
Can I enter the pharmacy before the pharmacist arrives and get started with my work?	No. The laws states clearly that no-one except a pharmacist may have access to the pharmacy. No-one except the pharmacist may have a key to the pharmacy. If you work in a hospital, you may be in the prescription area when a pharmacist is on duty and inside the perimeter of the hospital. You may not have access to the pharmacy when a pharmacist is not in the hospital.
Can a customer bring back a prescription and return it to the pharmacy?	No. Once a prescription has been dispensed and has left the pharmacy, it cannot be returned. If a dispensing error is suspected the pharmacist must decide the appropriate action.
Besides helping the pharmacist prepare prescriptions what other duties can I do as a technician?	Your job as a technician is to support/assist the pharmacist you are working with. You may perform duties that do not require making judgment calls. A technician may perform data entry, count medication, and label oral prescription containers. For example: you may take a refill OK from the doctor's office but if they want to change the strength or directions for use, you must turn it over to the pharmacist. Remember that all prescriptions must be checked by the pharmacist before it is released to the patient.
What can I <b><u>NOT</u></b> do as a technician?	Below are specific examples (though not all inclusive) of what a technician may not do: -by pass any drug interaction when processing a prescription without a pharmacist's involvement -answer a question pertaining to a prescription medication or an over the counter medication -have a key to the pharmacy -know the combination to a pharmacy lock or lockbox containing the key or combination to the pharmacy -take a new prescription over the telephone -take a change in directions or strength of a prescription. -choose what medication to refill for a patient (if a patient asks for a refill on their heart medication the pharmacist must determine which medication to refill) - provide drug information to anyone - consult with the patient or patient's agent regarding their prescription drugs or Over-the-Counter medications