



The Cochrane Library: User Guide

NIS2

Databases covered:

- **Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews:** Full text systematic reviews of health care interventions. Authors locate, appraise and synthesise evidence from scientific studies. The conclusions are summarised, providing a unique collation of the known evidence on a given topic. Protocol (in progress) reviews are available in addition to full reviews.
- **Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects:** Includes structured abstracts of systematic reviews. Only reviews that meet minimum quality criteria are included. These reviews cover topics that have yet to be addressed in Cochrane reviews.
- **Central Register of Controlled Trials:** Major index of published clinical trials.
- **Cochrane Database of Methodology Reviews:** Full-text systematic reviews of methodological studies.
- **Health Technology Assessment Database:** Ongoing projects and completed publications from health technology assessment organisations.
- **NHS Economic Evaluation Database:** Structured abstracts of articles describing economic evaluations of health care interventions. Papers are included if they provide a comparison of treatments and examine both the costs and outcomes of the alternatives.

Accessing the Cochrane Library

Connect to the [Cochrane](http://www.thecochranelibrary.com) site directly at <http://www.thecochranelibrary.com>. There is no requirement to enter a username and password.

Browsing the Cochrane Library

To browse the contents of an individual database, click on the link for that database under the '**Browse articles**' option.

To browse by topic click on the **Topics** link at the right hand side of the screen. A drop down menu becomes available from which to choose your topic. The topics are arranged in a tree structure and become increasingly specific. The records are presented as underlined links, click on them to view the full record.

Searching the Cochrane Library

See [Database searching: a basic guide](#) for guidance on constructing your search strategy. There are a number of search options available. Choose the best option for the particular search that you have in mind.

- To search a phrase, enter it in quotes, e.g. "endometrial cancer"
- To truncate terms, use *, e.g. depress* will search for depressed, depression, etc. Truncation can also be used at the beginning of the word e.g. *depress* will also find antidepressants, or within the word, e.g. isch*mic will find ischemic or ischaemic
- Plurals are searched automatically
- Hyphens are valid characters. To search a term that may be hyphenated, enter both options

Simple Search

Use the search box at the top right of the screen to enter your terms and click **Go**. You can use the operators AND, OR and NOT to make your search more specific. You will need to think of and enter separate searches for alternative spellings and synonyms.

Advanced Search

Using the advanced search option allows you to enter terms and specify which field (e.g. author, title) the terms should appear in. This facility also makes use of the operators AND, OR, and NOT.

MeSH (Medical Subject Heading) Search

The MeSH search facility matches your term to a subject heading or descriptor. The advantage of this search option is that all synonyms are retrieved.

Enter a term into the search box and click the **Thesaurus** option to see a complete list of all descriptors that include that word. Click on a term to select it for a MeSH Tree search. Click the **Go** button to execute the search for that term.

Selecting **Explode** broadens the search to include the term you have chosen, as well as any narrower terms that branch off underneath your choice. Note that articles are always indexed under the most specific term available.

Using the Search History

Clicking on the **search history** link allows you to see the searches that you have carried out. You can combine searches to bring more than one concept together. For example, if you were looking for the effect of exercise on back pain:

- Carry out a MeSH search for back pain
- Carry out a MeSH search for exercise
- Click on the **search history** link (top right of screen)
- Use the word **AND** to combine the searches (type into the search box **#1 AND #2**)

Combine searches from your history using the operators AND, OR and NOT.

Displaying search results

See the list of results from your search by clicking the link for the database you want to see the results from.

Click the **record** link to view the full text record. The table of contents will be displayed in the left frame and the beginning of the record in the right. Navigate around the record using the table of contents or by clicking on **next** at the top right of the frame. Choose the **PDF** option to display the whole record for printing.

Use the **Select all** option at the bottom of the list, or mark the checkbox beside individual records to select those to be saved. Click one of the **Export** options to save the records.

Help

You can access the online help index by clicking on the **Search tips** option.

If you need help or advice on using the Cochrane Library, contact any of the Health Sciences Libraries:

- Royal Hallamshire Hospital – by phone on extension 12030, or email hsl.rhh@sheffield.ac.uk
- Northern General Hospital – by phone on extension 66800, or email hsl.ngh@sheffield.ac.uk

Alternatively contact the Library on extension 27266 or email library@sheffield.ac.uk.