

A Quick Guide to searching PubMed

1. Content

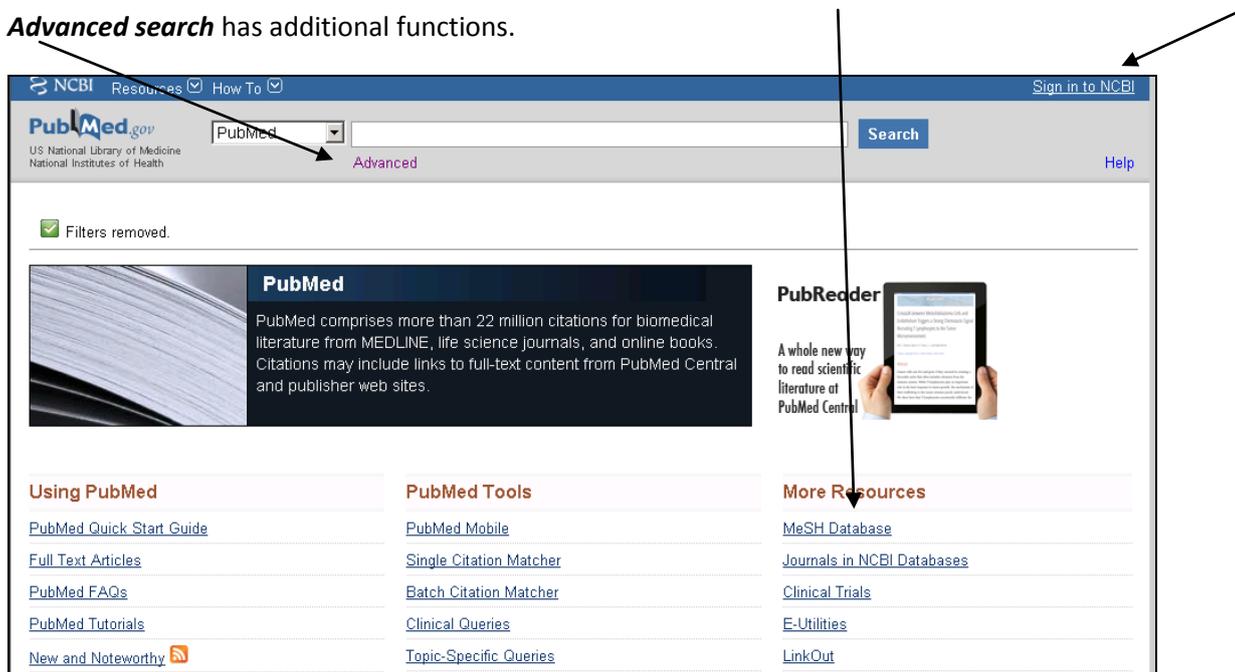
PubMed provides free web-based access to over 22 million citations for biomedical articles from the 1950s to the current week. These citations are from MedLine and additional life science journals, and new content not yet indexed on MedLine. It includes links to many sites providing full-text articles and other related sources.

2. Accessing PubMed

Go to www.pubmed.gov. You do not need to log in to conduct searches, but you can set up a profile (via **My NCBI** on the home page) which allows you to save searches and set up alerts.

3. PubMed home page

This page contains a search box, plus links to functions including **MeSH** (medical subject headings) and **MyNCBI**. **Advanced search** has additional functions.

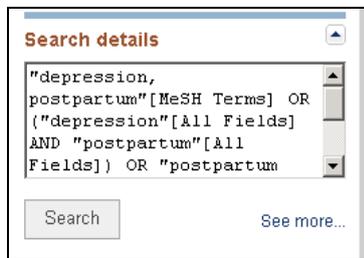


4. Searching

Enter your search word(s) in the search box. They can be a keyword or a phrase. You can enter all the terms related to your search but this may restrict the number of results retrieved.

Search tips

- i. If you enter individual concepts one at a time you will have more control over your search. You can then use **Advanced search** to combine the sets created (see below).
- ii. **PubMed will attempt to turn your search terms into a more structured search strategy**, incorporating MeSH headings (This process is referred to as query mapping). On the results page there is a search details box (halfway down the right hand side) which shows you how PubMed has handled your search. If PubMed hasn't searched as you intended, you can amend this box and click on search.



For example: *postnatal depression* is translated into the query: "depression, postpartum"[MeSH Terms] OR ("depression"[All Fields] AND "postpartum"[All Fields]) OR "postpartum depression"[All Fields] OR ("postnatal"[All Fields] AND "depression"[All Fields]) OR "postnatal depression"[All Fields].

iii. You can **search for a specific phrase** in quotation marks but this will turn off the query mapping.

For example: "postnatal depression" will just search as "postnatal depression"[All Fields].

iv. **Combining searches.** You can use the search operators OR and AND to broaden or narrow your search in the basic search box.

- Tea OR coffee retrieves records containing **either** tea **or** coffee **or both** (widening the search)
- Tea AND coffee retrieves records containing **both** tea **and** coffee (narrowing the search)

v. **Author search.** To search for articles by a specific author type the author's surname followed by a space and then the first initial. PubMed will recognise this as an author entry and search accordingly.

For example: Pedro Chocair should be searched for as **Chocair P**

5. Search results screen

The number of results is shown at the top of the page of the results list.

Your results appear in a summary format. To see more of the record click on **Display Setting**. For example this will allow you to see the abstract or to change the order the results are sorted in.

Filters. Displayed down the left hand column, filters allow you limit your results by date, availability, article type, language etc. When a limit is activated it is indicated at the top of the results list.

The screenshot shows the PubMed search results interface. At the top, the search term "postnatal depression" is entered in the search box. Below the search box, there are options for "RSS", "Save search", and "Advanced". The results are displayed in a summary format, showing "Results: 1 to 20 of 6002". The first result is "The epigenetic switches for neural development and psychiatric disorders" by Lv J, Xin Y, Zhou W, Qiu Z. The second result is "Neonatal treatment with monosodium glutamate lastingly facilitates spreading depression in the rat cortex" by Lima CB, Soares GD, Vitor SM, Castellano B, Andrade da Costa BL, Guedes RC. On the left side, there are filters for "Article types", "Text availability", and "Publication dates". On the right side, there are options for "Display Settings", "Send to", "Filters", "Results by year", and "Related searches".

Clicking on the title of the article will give more details including the abstract and links (in the right hand column) either to the full text (where it is freely available) or to the publishers/source website. Where journals are available

only by subscription follow the Athens links on the publishers website and login using your NHS Athens details (please note only content subscribed to by NHS England/the local Trust will be available).

Useful additional links are provided including **Related citations** (below a result) and **Related searches** (in the right hand column) both of which can lead to further

6. Advanced search

Advanced search displays the search history, allows you to select which fields of the database record you would like search terms to appear in as you build your search, and gives options for combining earlier searches.

To combine previous searches enter the line numbers of the searches you wish to combine separated by OR or AND as appropriate e.g. #1 OR #2.

Search	Add to builder	Query	Items found	Time
#14	Add	Search (#10 AND #13)	2479	06:59:50
#13	Add	Search (#11 OR # 12)	3650253	06:59:49
#10	Add	Search postnatal depression	6002	06:59:48
#11	Add	Search prevalence	1744014	06:59:23
#12	Add	Search risk factor	864521	06:58:13

Search tip

You can use brackets to create a more complex search strategy. Terms within the brackets will be combined first. E.g. (#2 OR #3) AND #4 to find #2, #3 or both together with #4.

MeSH (Medical Subject Headings)

PubMed gives all its records **Medical Subject Headings**. They provide a consistent way to retrieve information where different authors may have used different terminology for the same concept.

MeSH headings and subheadings can be added to your search by typing in the term in the **PubMed Advanced Search Builder**, and selecting MeSH term as the field. Your term will be mapped to an appropriate MeSH heading (or you can select via the index list).

PubMed Advanced Search Builder

(high blood pressure[MeSH Terms]) AND "epidemiology"[MeSH Subheading]

[Edit](#)

Builder

MeSH Terms	high blood pressure	Show index list
AND	MeSH Subheading	"epidemiology"[MeSH Subheading] Show index list
AND	All Fields	Show Hide indexed

[Search](#) or [Add to history](#)

To add a subheading choose MeSH Subheading as the field, and choose the ones you would like from **Show index list**

(Note: If you wish to select the MeSH headings yourself there is a separate linked database accessible from the PubMed Home page which allows you to search through the MeSH thesaurus and build up a search strategy. The default is for narrower, more specific terms to be included in the search.

Clicking on the heading link will permit you to choose subheadings and restrict the search to the exact heading only.

The screenshot shows the MeSH search interface. At the top, there is a search bar with 'MeSH' selected and 'dementia' entered. Below the search bar are links for 'Save search', 'Limits', and 'Advanced'. The main content area displays search results for 'dementia', showing two entries: 'Dementia' (unchecked) and 'Alzheimer Disease' (checked). To the right, the 'PubMed Search Builder' panel is visible, containing a search query: ('Hypertension"[Mesh]) AND ("Dementia"[Mesh] OR "Alzheimer Disease"[Mesh]). Below the query are buttons for 'Add to search builder', 'Search PubMed', and 'Find related data'. A dropdown menu for 'Database' is also present.

The search builder can be edited if necessary and then be used as a search in **PubMed** and added to the history displayed in **Advanced Search** there.)

7. Saving, emailing and printing your search results.

Clipboard. The clipboard lets you group selected records from more than one search, so you can print and save them all at once.

- Select the records you want to keep
- Select Clipboard from the **Send to** drop down menu.

To view the contents of your clipboard, click on the link beside Clipboard to the right of the screen. Clipboard items will only be saved while you are online so you need to save them or email them if you wish to keep them for longer, or register for **MyNCBI** to save in **PubMed**.

Emailing

To email results to yourself:

- Choose email from the **Send to** dropdown menu
- Enter your email address in the screen that follows.

Saving

- Choose File from the **Send to** drop down menu
- Select the Format and Sort by options
- Select where you want to save your results to.

Printing

- Save the results to the clipboard
- Display the results in your desired format (eg Abstract) by using the drop-down menu beside the Display Settings button. Make sure that all the results you wish to print are on the same page
- Use the print function of the Web Browse.