Thesaurus Searching using PubMed
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## Is this the guide you need?

If you aren’t sure what a thesaurus term is and why you might want to use one, have a look at the Thesaurus Searching guide

If you haven’t ever used PubMed before, you may find it helpful to start with the Searching using PubMed guide first.

If you’re ready to start using thesaurus terms on PubMed….

## Find MeSH

On PubMed, thesaurus terms are known as MeSH.

To enter a term go to the Advanced search screen.

Choose MeSH terms from the drop down menu to the left of the search box

## Using MeSH

If you know what the correct MeSH term for your search topic is

Just enter the term you’re interested in and click ADD.

Your term will appear in the query box ready for you to click Search

But how many people know that the MeSH term for hand washing is hand disinfection?

## Identifying your MeSH term

If you don’t know what term articles you’re interested in might be indexed under, it gets a bit more tricky.

You could click Show Index which will give you terms near whatever you enter in the alphabet, but won’t show you neoplasms if you enter the term cancer or mental disorders if you enter the term psychiatric, so you might miss the best term.

## Finding the right term

One better way to identify terms is to look at useful articles from a keyword search.

First click on the title of a useful article

Then scroll through the article record.

At the end of each article record, PubMed lists the MeSH terms the article is indexed under.

You can note what you want to use, then enter the term in the Advanced Search screen using the Mesh Terms search option from the drop down menu.

## An alternative way of finding the right term

Alternatively, you can use the MeSH terms option and search for whatever term you think of

But rather than looking at the list of results for this search

Click Advanced

## Looking at the Details

Look at the History and Search Details

Click on the arrow

PubMed will show you what MeSH term it looked for.

This might be what you were looking for, or it might need some tweaking. For example, a search for Nursing also searches for the MeSH term for breast feeding. If this happens, copy and paste the bit you do want into the query box.

Don’t forget that these are only results for one of your keywords. You’ll need to combine them with other keywords or thesaurus terms to get the results you need.

## Combining Results

To find articles about handwashing and compliance

You could combine with keywords

Or with another thesaurus term

Just use the … options in your History in Advanced Search.

The first time you click on … you’ll see

For every other set of terms, when you click … you’ll see

Just add as many search lines as you have and then click Search

## Further help

For more help with what AND and OR mean and when to use them look at our When to use AND and OR guide

If want help with what search words to use, watch Constructing a Search Strategy

If you’re ready to try your thesaurus search on another database, have a look at the Thesaurus searching using… guide

If you have questions you’d like to ask a librarian…

## Any Questions?

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Ask for help if you need it.