# Thesaurus Searching using CINAHL

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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 CINAHL before, you may find it helpful to start with the Searching using CINAHL guide first.

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

## Find CINAHL Headings

On CINAHL, thesaurus terms are known as CINAHL Headings

Click the CINAHL Headings option on the toolbar

## CINAHL Headings search screen

Put the term you are looking for into the box and click Browse

## Finding the exact term

If the database doesn’t have that term in its index list, it might suggest an alternative.

I asked for all articles indexed under Cancer. CINAHL said Neoplasms

Clicking Neoplasms gave me the following list

At the top is the main heading

but you also have subheadings (indented)

and if you click on the

even narrower topics

Until you find the one which is the best match for you

## Choosing your best fit

Tick the box next to whichever term best matches your search topic. You can tick more than one if you’re interested in several areas.

If we look for breast cancer the index has either a generic breast neoplasms term,

or if we wanted to be more specific and look only at breast cancer in men, Breast Neoplasms, Male

The box to the right of breast neoplasms means ‘find this term and any indented term beneath it’ if it’s ticked. Called Explode on the database.

## Scope Note

If you’re not sure from the name whether you have the right term, you can click on the Scope Note to tell you more about what the database indexes under a specific topic.

The Scope Note might suggest alternative terms, or – if a term is quite new to the index – say what date it was introduced and let you know what term to look under for older articles.

## Narrowing further

When you click on a term in the list, a blue box appears on the right

This gives you even more options

You might be interested only in the

Psychosocial impact of breast cancer

or

Breast cancer surgery

## Search the database

When you’re happy you’ve clicked the boxes next to the right terms for you

(and clicked Explode if necessary)

You’ll see your choices appear in the box on the right

Click Search Database

## Results Screen

Your results will appear on screen

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

## Combining Results

To find articles about body image and breast cancer

You could combine with keywords

Or with another thesaurus term

Just tick the box next to each row and click Search with AND

## 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.