Search methods

In this section: |

Citing databases and study registers

The preferred format for the following databases is all upper-case letters: MEDLINE, CENTRAL, OLDMEDLINE, and CINAHL (not CIN**HA**L). A number of databases use a mixture of lower-case and upper-case letters, for example, Embase (not EMBASE), PsycLIT (not Psyc**h**LIT) and PsycINFO (not Psyc**h**INFO).

Each Cochrane Review Group is responsible for preparing a register of studies in their area of expertize. The name of the register may vary, but it will follow one of the following formats depending on the Cochrane Review Group's choice: [Cochrane Group name] Specialized Register; [Cochrane Group name] Specialised Register; or [Cochrane Group name] Trials Register.

The databases and trials registers and other resources that are searched for studies for a Cochrane Review are listed the 'Search methods for identification of studies' (in the 'Methods' section). The databases and registers must be listed in the following order: [Cochrane Group name] Specialised Register (or Specialized Register or Trials Register), CENTRAL, MEDLINE, Embase, and any other databases.

(In the Abstract, brief text may be used to describe the sources searched, e.g. 'We searched CENTRAL, MEDLINE, Embase, five other databases and three trials registers (month year)'.)

In the Search Methods section, the date of the latest search (day month year) should be provided along with the issue or version number (as appropriate) of each database, e.g. CENTRAL (year, issue number). The date of inception of the database should be given where known. Database names should include the platform or provider name, and websites should include the full name and URL.

The date range (for databases) or search date (for study registers) of each search must be listed with each database; for example, CENTRAL (year, issue number), and for most other databases, such as MEDLINE, it should be in the form 'MEDLINE (year to day month year)'.

Example:

- Cochrane Wounds Specialized Register (searched 10 February 2015)
- Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL; 2015, Issue 1) in the Cochrane Library (searched 10 February 2015);
- MEDLINE Ovid (1946 to 10 February 2015);
- Embase Ovid (1974 to 9 February 2015);
- CINAHL EBSCO (Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature; 1982 to 9 February 2015);
- PsycINFO Ovid (from 1806 to 10 February 2015);
- AMED Ovid (Allied and Complementary Medicine; 1985 to 10 February 2015);
- LILACS (Latin American and Caribbean Health Science Information database; 1982 to 10 February 2015);
- ISRCTN registry (www.isrctn.com; searched 10 February 2015);
- US National Institutes of Health Ongoing Trials Register ClinicalTrials.gov (www.clinicaltrials.gov; searched 10 February 2015);
- Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry (www.anzctr.org.au; searched 10 February 2015);
- World Health Organization International Clinical Trials Registry Platform (apps.who.int/trialsearch; searched 10 February 2015);
- EU Clinical Trials Register (www.clinicaltrialsregister.eu; searched 10 February 2015).

Other formatting options for MEDLINE and Embase:

- MEDLINE Ovid (1946 to November week 3 2015)
- Embase Ovid (1974 to 2015 week 47)

Search terms

Search terms consist of text words (preferred spelling is two words, not 'textword') and indexing or controlled vocabulary terms. The preferred format for referring to the National Library of Medicine's controlled vocabulary used for indexing articles for MEDLINE (and PubMed) is MeSH (*not* MESH).