Major Topic Headings
Subject analysts examine each article and assign the most specific MeSH terms applicable, typically ten to twelve per citation. In PubMed, the major topic is represented by an asterisk.

To view MeSH terms for a selected article in PubMed, click on the MeSH Terms, etc. plus button below the citation in the abstract format.

In the MeSH Database, use Restrict to MeSH Major Topic to limit a search to citations where the heading is the major focus of the article. The term added to the search builder will be followed by [MAJR] (e.g. "Neoplasms"[Majr])

Subheadings
Subheadings are used to help describe more completely a particular aspect of a subject. In the MeSH database, subheadings logically paired with the main heading are presented. In the example above, methods is the subheading.

In the MeSH Database, check the appropriate subheading box(es), then use the Add to search builder button with OR to build a search.

In this example, the search would include: ("Neoplasms/analysis"[Mesh] OR "Neoplasms/epidemiology"[Mesh])

Advanced Searches with Field Tags
Search PubMed directly by using specific MeSH headings, subheadings and other qualifier codes; case does not matter. For the complete list, visit PubMed Help and the Search Field Descriptions and Tags link.

- **MeSH Heading**: [mh] or [MeSH] may be added to a term to restrict a search to only MeSH terms (e.g. knee [mh])
- **Subheadings**: Two letters may be used for subheadings. Therapy is th; so cancer/therapy and cancer/th are equivalent searches. Use only one subheading per term; combine additional subheadings by using OR (neoplasms/th OR neoplasms/an). A search may also "free float" headings [mh] and subheadings [sh] (e.g., hypertension [mh] AND toxicity [sh])
- **Do Not Explode**: use [mh:noexp] or [sh:noexp] to restrict searches to articles focusing on the broadest MeSH term
- **Major Topics**: use [majr] to restrict a search to citations where the term is the major topic or focus of the article. This may be used with Do Not Explode: [majr:noexp]

Assistance and Training

NOTE: MeSH terms apply only to Indexed for MEDLINE citations. Other types of citations (e.g. as supplied by publisher) cannot be searched using MeSH terms.
Search PubMed with the MeSH Database

Access MeSH in PubMed from the drop-down Search menu OR click on MeSH Database on the PubMed homepage or Advanced Search OR access Resources on the top blue bar, then Literature, then MeSH.

Enter a topic into the Search bar and click the Go button. Possible results include: a fully displayed term (e.g. prognosis), several terms (e.g. measles) or a related term (e.g. cancer in this example).

- **Neoplasms**
  1. New abnormal growth of tissue.
  2. Year introduced: diagnosis was NEO

Note: Always verify that the definition of the term matches the expected definition.

Refine a Search

The MeSH Database offers options to clarify and focus searches. Click the selected MeSH title (neoplasms); the fully displayed term includes:
- Definition or scope note, usually including the year introduced
- Check boxes
  - Subheadings
  - Restrict Search to MeSH Major Topic
  - Do not include MeSH terms found below this term in the MeSH hierarchy
- Entry Terms (similar terms used by an author)
- See Also related and linked terms
- MeSH hierarchy of linked terms

Combine MeSH Terms

Use the PubMed search builder to combine multiple MeSH terms and subheadings.

The search builder appears on all MeSH pages.
1. Check the boxes of the desired MeSH terms, subheadings and/or restrictions
2. Click the Add to search builder button and select either AND, OR or NOT from the drop-down menu
3. Continue to search for and add terms
4. Make any necessary changes to the parentheses and Boolean terms in the search box to clarify the search
5. When all desired terms have been added and the search has been checked for accuracy, click Search PubMed

Recommended: do complex searches in pieces. Send groups of terms separately to PubMed. Combine the terms using PubMed’s Advanced Search. Use the larger Details to make any necessary changes. Click the Search button.

The MeSH Hierarchy

MeSH terms are arranged hierarchically by subject categories with more specific (narrower) terms arranged beneath broader terms. PubMed automatically explodes searches to include all narrower terms.

Thus, a search for **neoplasms** will include all articles which focus not only on the main term, neoplasms, but also focus on narrower terms such as **urachal cyst**.

Check Do not include MeSH terms found below this term in the MeSH hierarchy for articles focusing only on the main term rather than focusing on related narrower terms.

NOTE: The MeSH hierarchy may also be used to identify related broader or narrower terms to help focus a search or to find additional search terms. Click on terms to access and use them in a search.

Use Links

- Search PubMed for one specific MeSH term. Only the main heading will be used.
  - PubMed: search PubMed with the selected term
  - PubMed – Major Topic: search PubMed with the MeSH term, retrieving citations where the term is a major focus of the article
  - Clinical Queries: put the MeSH term into the Clinical Queries search box where the search may be further refined
  - NLM MeSH Browser: show the MeSH browser Descriptor Data for this term including Scope Note and Allowable Qualifiers