A guide to using NHS Evidence
www.evidence.nhs.uk

This guide is for pharmacy, medicines management and other healthcare professionals and prescribers in primary care and secondary care. It aims to help users navigate NHS Evidence effectively to find useful information, particularly regarding medicines.

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The NHS Evidence home page, www.evidence.nhs.uk looks like this:

![NHS Evidence home page](image-url)
What this website is

NHS Evidence provides access to evidence based-resources for clinical staff and decision makers in health and social care. It has been developed by the National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) and incorporates some of the key components from the former National Library for Health (NLH).

Website content

The main feature of NHS Evidence is its search function.

NHS Evidence provides a simple search function for users to access information and guidelines from a variety of reliable sources using a single search box. As well as providing evidence relating to healthcare and the use of medicines it includes information relating to social care and public health.

Some sources, such as NICE, are ‘accredited’ by NHS Evidence as being particularly reliable. Sources for information about medicines available through NHS Evidence include:

- Guidelines from national bodies such as NICE, SIGN and CKS
- Information from the BNF
- Evidence-based reviews from the Cochrane database
- Medicines Q&A documents from the NeLM website
- New product evaluations from the NeLM website
- Monographs from the UKMi New Drugs Online database

This document explains how to use NHS Evidence to find information about medicines and their use.

Registered users of NHS Evidence can use ‘My Evidence’ facilities to save results and searches, email searches and set up News Feeds. See below for how to register.

NHS Evidence also provides access to specialist resources.

Some of the information in NHS evidence is arranged into ‘Specialist Collections’ covering a particular therapeutic area or patient group. There are 34 specialist collections, accessible from a link at the top of the NHS Evidence homepage. Some of the information from specialist collections is also available through the search function.

NHS Evidence provides access to advanced healthcare databases and to full-text books and journal articles. To access these resources, users must register for an NHS Athens username and password (see below).

Examples of innovative practice relating to the QIPP (Quality, Innovation, Productivity and Prevention) agenda are available via NHS Evidence.

NHS Athens and QIPP resources are not available through the NHS Evidence search function; they are accessed separately from links at the top of the NHS Evidence homepage.

How to register

My Evidence

You can search NHS Evidence and view the information you find without a password. You need to register with NHS Evidence to access ‘My Evidence’ which allows you to save results and searches, email searches and set up News Feeds.

Registration is free and available for healthcare and social care practitioners. To register, click on ‘register’ in the top right hand corner of the screen then complete the online form. You will then receive an email prompting you to register a password. Follow the instructions provided to complete your registration.
NHS Athens

You need an NHS Athens username and password in order to access full-text books and journal articles and to search advanced healthcare databases such as Medline and Embase. Once registered, you can access these resources from any computer with internet access.

Users within the ‘NHS family’ are eligible for an NHS Athens username and password. The term NHS Family is used to describe staff working for or delivering services on behalf of, or in conjunction with the NHS. This includes all registered pharmacists.

To register, go to the NHS Evidence home page and click on ‘NHS Athens Resources’ at the top of the screen. Choose ‘Register for NHS Athens’ from the drop-down menu and follow the on-screen instructions. If you are unsure whether you qualify for an NHS Athens username and password, click on ‘Check if you are eligible’ on the left hand side of the screen.

After registering, you will receive your password by email. If you register using an NHS email address, this is normally within a couple of days; if you use a non-NHS email address it may take up to 15 days.

When to use NHS Evidence

Use NHS Evidence when you want to find evidence-based or evaluated information, in particular, guidelines, Medicines Q&As, Cochrane reviews and new product evaluations. It is not the best place to look for current awareness articles such as MHRA safety alerts and recently published clinical studies and editorials. These, and other articles such as press releases and position statements (from organisations such as the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, PSNC and Royal Colleges), can be found by searching the National electronic Library for Medicines (NeLM) at www.nelm.nhs.uk.

How to find information using NHS Evidence

Searching NHS Evidence

NHS Evidence provides a single search to access information from a variety of sources.

To conduct a search:

1. Type your search term(s) in the search box on the home page
2. Click on the magnifying glass
Choosing search terms

NHS Evidence has some search options to help you find what you’re looking for. These are described below. You can also see examples by clicking on ‘Search help’ underneath the search box.

- **Multiple words**
  If you enter two or more terms in the search box, NHS Evidence will search for documents that contain both or all those words. There is no need to type AND in between them. Think of the information you are looking for when choosing your search terms. If your search brings up too many hits, you can make the search more specific by adding more search terms.

- **NOT**
  You can use the Boolean operator NOT to specify searches that do not include a search term (e.g. to find information on metformin for polycystic ovaries it may be helpful to use the term NOT diabetes).

- **OR**
  You can use the Boolean operator OR to find articles that contain either term (e.g. lactation OR breastfeeding).

- **Phrases**
  To find phrases, type them in speech marks (e.g. “cluster headache”).

- **Wildcard**
  To find words with the same stem but different endings you can use a ‘wildcard’ by typing * at the end of a word stem (e.g. pregnan* will search for pregnant and pregnancy).

- **Mis-spelt words**
  If the search engine thinks you have mis-spelled a word, it will offer a ‘corrected’ set of results in a similar way to Google. For example if you search for verpaml, you will be asked ‘Did you mean verapamil?’

- **Synonyms**
  The search engine might suggest synonyms for your search term in order to widen your search. For example if you search for fetal, the results page will say that it has searched for foetal as well. You can then choose to view the results for either term.

Looking at the results

**Example**

You have been asked if verapamil is a suitable treatment for cluster headache.

Type the search terms verapamil and “cluster headache” into the search box and then click on the magnifying glass:

![Evidence in Health and Social Care](image.png)

- [Search help](#)  -  [Add NHS Evidence to your site](#)
The result screen will look like this:

Top:
• What you searched for
• Number of hits
• Options to change the way the results are presented

Centre:
• List of hits with links to view them

Left hand side:
• Filters to refine your search

Changing the way results are presented

Towards the top of the screen you will see what you searched for and the number of hits that have been found.

Relevance vs. date order

Hits are automatically arranged in relevance order with the most ‘relevant’ hit at the top. You can choose to view the hits in date order with the most recent hit at the top. To do this click on ‘sort these results by date’.

NHS Evidence gives each hit a rating for relevance. This rating takes into account factors such as how frequently the search terms appear in the resource and where they appear (for example, occurrences in the title or abstract are considered more important than in the body of the article). Results are also ranked according to a relative hierarchy of evidence (for example, guidelines are considered more relevant than primary research articles).
In NHS Evidence it is usually more helpful to sort the hits by relevance. Viewing hits in date order is useful when you are looking for news or current awareness articles; NHS Evidence is not the best place to look for these types of articles.

At the bottom of the screen you can choose to view between 10 and 50 hits per page. It can be useful to present the hits in as few pages as possible so that you can view them more quickly.

How each hit is presented

The hits are listed down the centre of the results screen. For each hit you can see:

- **Title** (in blue). Click on the title to view the whole document.
- **Summary** (in black). Most hits show a few words from the main text; this may or may not be useful.
- **Source** (in green). This tells you the source of evidence and date published.

When deciding if a hit will be useful for you, look at the **source**. This tells you who published the information and may indicate the type of information it is, for example a clinical guideline or patient information leaflet.

**Example**

Look at the hits from our example search, verapamil and “cluster headache”. The source and title of each hit will help you identify if it is likely to be relevant to you.

What is the evidence for verapamil for prevention of cluster headache?  
... evidence for verapamil for prevention of cluster headache? Prepared for the treatment of chronic cluster headache patients...migraine and cluster headache. Headache...lithium and verapamil in cluster... read summary  
National electronic Library for Medicines, 06 August 2008 - Publisher: East Anglia Medicines Information Service - Publication type: Medicine

Source is NeLM > Medicines Q&A.  
This is a UKMi Medicines Q&A article on verapamil for cluster headache

Calcium Channel Blockers (IC)  
...vasodilation. Examples include...verapamil...very strongly monophasic...negatively monophasic than verapamil to be still be used...haemorrhage Prophylaxis for cluster headache. Evidence of efficacy and any other... Intravenous verapamil...illuminated have been found...  
Patient UK - EMIS, 20 August 2009

Source is Patient UK.  
This is a patient leaflet on calcium channel blockers.

Cluster headache and the trigeminal autonomic cephalalgias  
...4.7.4.3 Cluster headache and the trigeminal autonomic cephalalgias. Cluster headache rarely responds to the treatment of cluster headache. For instance is treated effectively...Verapamil or lithium (both...  
British National Formulary, 21 March 2009

Guidelines for all healthcare professionals in the diagnosis and management of migraine, tension-type, chronic medication-overuse headache. 3rd edition, 2007

...8. Management of cluster headache 8.1 Objective...lithium and verapamil in cluster headache. Very...delay as verapamil is up-titrated can... read summary

Source is the BNF.  
This is information on cluster headache from chapter 4.7

Source is British Association for the Study of Headache.  
This is a guidance document.
Click on the title of the hit you want, to view. It will open in the current window. If you want to view the hit in a new tab or window, right click on the title then select 'Open in New Tab' or 'Open in New Window'.

What is the evidence for verapamil for prevention of cluster headache?

...evidence for verapamil for prevention of cluster headache? Prepared forverapamil patients...migraine and cluster headache. Headache...National electronic Library for Medicines, 06 August 2008 - Publisher: East Anglia Medicines Information Service.

This hit is a Medicines Q&A article. Click on the title to view it. This takes you to the relevant page of the NeLM website (shown below), where the Q&A lives.

National electronic Library for Medicines

About the NeLM | Help & Support | Site Feedback | Update newsletter Subscription

Search the NeLM

Medicines A-Z

Find key information about medicines by name (prototype)

Browse by Categories:
BNF Category | Medical Specialty | National Health Service | Medicines Information

Browse by NeLM area:
Evidence | Other Library Updates | News | Health In Focus | Medicines A-Z | Communities | Community Areas | Useful Links

What is the evidence for verapamil for prevention of cluster headache?

Original article by: Kate Smith
Publisher: East Anglia Medicines Information Service
Date published: 06/08/2008 14:31
Expires on: 06/08/2013 14:31

Using filters to refine the results

If you have too many hits, you can use the categories listed on the left hand side of the results screen to reduce the number of hits you have. The categories are called 'result filters' or 'navigators'.

Filters are divided into five sections:

- **Area of interest**
  e.g. clinical, public health, social care

- **Type of information**
  e.g. guidelines, policies, drug information

- **Clinical queries**
  e.g. diagnosis, therapy

- **Source**
  e.g. BNF, NICE, Department of Health (DH), National electronic Library for Medicines (NeLM), New Drugs Online database (NDO).

  Sources are listed as acronyms. Point your cursor at each for the full name. If a source has teardrop logo by it, it has been accredited by NHS Evidence.

- **Medicines and Devices**
  Alphabetical list of drug names

- **Published date**
  You can limit your search to articles published in the last 3 months, 6 months, year or last 3 years.
Two additional filters are available:

- **BNF Sections**
  If you search using a drug name, an additional ‘BNF Sections’ filter appears. You can use this to access information from the BNF; relevant chapters are listed. This can be useful for finding the appropriate BNF monograph for medicines that appear in more than one chapter.

- **SCIE Sections**
  If you select the ‘Area of interest’ filter ‘Social care’, an additional ‘SCIE Sections’ filter appears. This allows you to access information from the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE). Sections include Benefits and personal finance, Criminal justice, law and rights, Government and social policy and Health and health care.

**Example**

You have been asked which patients orlistat is recommended for in the management of obesity.

NB: To find information about orlistat such as indications and contraindications, we could look at the BNF or the Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC). But to find information about the recommended use of orlistat, guidelines may be more helpful. We will use NHS Evidence to find relevant guidelines.

Search NHS Evidence using the terms orlistat and obesity. This brings up more than 200 hits. Use the filters on the left hand side of the results screen to narrow down your search to guidelines.

To do this, select the filter ‘Types of information’. This brings up a box with types of information for you to choose from; select ‘Guidelines’.

The results screen will now show only those hits that have been categorised as guidelines.
On the left hand side of the screen you can see the filter has been applied. You can remove the filter by clicking on the X in the blue box:

The filter you have chosen is shown here. To remove the filter, click on the blue box.

If you apply more filters they will be shown here.

You can narrow your search down further by applying a second filter. For example limit your results to guidelines produced by CKS.

To do this, select the filter ‘Sources’. This brings up a box with sources to choose from; choose CKS:

Select the filter ‘Sources’

Then choose ‘CKS’. You can see there will be 6 hits.

NB: You can point your cursor over the acronyms to see what they stand for.

The results screen will now show only those hits from CKS. You can see that all the hits are from the same source.
We have now applied two filters. Click on the X to remove a filter.

You can see that all hits are from the same source.

Click here to remove all filters.

Use the titles to choose the hit you want. Click on the title of the one you want to view.

**Searching an individual source (without using filters)**

If you know which source you want, you can search directly instead of using filters; this can be quicker.

To do this, type the source name (e.g. CKS, NICE, Cochrane) in the search box with your search term. You then get the option to view results from just that source.

**Example**

To look for a Cochrane review of gabapentin:

Use the search terms gabapentin Cochrane. At the top of the results screen you will see: “Did you want to see results for gabapentin from only Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews”.

Click on this to view the results.

Search terms: gabapentin cochrane

You will be asked if you want to view results from Cochrane only. Click on this link.
Using filters vs. searching individual sources

When deciding how to search think about the information you want to find. By restricting your search to a single source you may more easily and quickly get to the information you want; however you may miss useful information from other sources.

Example

Looking for information on new medicines or drugs in development, using NDO.

NHS Evidence provides access to the NDO database, which was previously only available to registered users. NDO is a database of information about drugs in development and is maintained by UKMi pharmacists.

Information is currently available on over 1200 drugs in development, including data on licence extensions and new formulations of marketed drugs. NDO also contains links to independent evaluated information, where available, for drugs pre-launch and up to two years post-launch.

You can search just NDO by typing the drug name or condition plus NDO in the search box. You will then be asked if you want to results from only New Drugs Online.

If we search for belimumab and select hits from NDO only, we get one hit which is the monograph from NDO. NDO monographs look like this:

If we search NHS Evidence for belimumab we get results from all sources. These include an evaluation from the National Horizon Scanning Centre (NHSC).
NDO monographs are regularly updated and are likely to provide sufficient information for most users. If you require more detailed information the NHSC monograph may be helpful, but note that it may not have been recently published.

The NDO database can also be used to provide reports for horizon scanning. This function is not available through NHS Evidence but NHS staff with responsibility for budget setting and resource planning can register for it. To register, and for further information on NDO, click on the link at the top left hand corner of any NDO monograph, or go to www.ukmi.nhs.uk/applications/NDO/.

**My Evidence**

My Evidence allows you to save results and searches and email searches. You need to register and log in to do this. See ‘how to register’ towards the start of this guide.

To login, click on ‘Login’ at the top of the screen then enter your email address and password. The options to ‘Register’ or ‘Login’ will change to ‘My Evidence’ and ‘Logout’. To access your ‘My Evidence’ homepage click on ‘My Evidence’ or click on the NHS Evidence logo in the top right hand corner of the screen.

**Saving individual hits**

You can save individual hits from a search. Click on ‘save result’ under the hit you want:

**Obesity**

...diabetes: comparison with Orlistat (Xenical). Obesity 18(1), 108-115...should I prescribe? Orlistat is the anti-obesity drugs of choice when...should I prescribe? Orlistat is the anti-obesity drugs of choice when...

Clinical Knowledge Summaries, 13 September 2007 - Publication type: Topics | 📘 save result

Unless you have already logged in, you will be prompted to log in using your username and password.

The following screen will then appear, asking you where the result is to be saved. Use an existing category or create a new one.

Choose where you want to save the result

Then click on save

Your result is saved within My Evidence. To view your saved results you need to enter My Evidence (click on the NHS Evidence logo or ‘My Evidence’ in the top right hand corner of the screen). You can then choose what you want to view (see below):
To view your results, choose the ‘Saved Results’ tab as shown below then click on the result you want to view.

Other features of My Evidence

To access other features of My Evidence click on ‘Actions’ towards the top right hand side of the results screen:

This brings up 5 options:

1. **Save this search**

Sometimes it may be helpful to save the search if it is a complicated one (with lots of filters) and one you are likely to want to repeat. It means you can repeat the search without having to enter your search terms.

Example

To save a search, click on ‘Actions’ at the top right hand side of the results screen, then choose ‘Save this search’. You will be asked to choose a name for your saved search. In this example, the name chosen to describe the search is ‘orlistat obesity’.

To view the saved search go to My Evidence (click on the NHS Evidence logo or ‘My Evidence’ in the top right hand corner of the screen) then select the ‘Saved searches’ tab. You will see a list of saved searches, and the dates they were saved. To re-run a search and see the results page, click on the one you want.
2. Save all results on this page

You can save all the hits on the results page. This allows you to look at them in more detail later and delete the ones you don’t want.

Example

To save all the hits on the results page, click on ‘Actions’ at the top right hand side of the results screen, then choose ‘Save all results on this page’.

You will be asked to choose a category to save it in or add a new one.

NB: This saves only the results from the current results page; to save results from multiple pages, repeat for each page. You can increase the number of hits displayed on each page (up to 50 per page) using the pull-down list at the bottom of the results screen.

To view your saved results go to My Evidence (click on the NHS Evidence logo or ‘My Evidence’ in the top right hand corner of the screen) then select the ‘Saved Result Categories’ tab. You can then click on the link to view a list of hits, and can then click on an individual hit to view it.

3. Email search to a colleague

This feature allows registered users to email search results to themselves or others.

Click on ‘Actions’ then ‘Email search to a colleague’
A form appears and prompts you to enter your email address (use the one you registered on My Evidence with) and the email address you want the results to go to.

The recipient will receive an email link to the search results.

4. Rate these results

Users can ‘rate’ the usefulness of their search results (on a scale of 1 to 5) to provide feedback to NHS Evidence.

5. Bookmark

Users can add a page to their favourites or submit it to a social bookmarking site.

News Feeds

Registered users can set up news feeds in particular areas such a clinical specialties or areas of health management. Users then receive regular email updates. News feeds may be provided by NHS Evidence or other sources such as NeLM, NPC or NHS Networks.
### Other information from NHS Evidence

#### Eyes on Evidence e-bulletin

All NHS Evidence users (not just those registered with My Evidence) can sign up to receive the ‘Eyes on Evidence’ email bulletin. There is a link to sign up on the left hand side of the results screen; complete the online form that comes up with your name and email address. The bulletin is emailed monthly.

#### Take a Tour

‘Take a Tour’ provides a series of online video guides to using NHS Evidence. The videos are hosted by YouTube and have images but no sound. They are not accessible by computers that block access to YouTube. The link to ‘Take a Tour’ is at the top right hand corner of the NHS Evidence screen.

### How to use NHS Evidence to access other resources

#### Specialist collections

Some of the information in NHS evidence is arranged into Specialist Collections. They provide access to reliable sources of evidence covering a particular area. There are currently 34 specialist collections covering various therapeutic areas (e.g. diabetes), patient groups (e.g. child health) and healthcare services (e.g. emergency and urgent care).

For more detailed information about the specialist collections, click on ‘Specialist Collections’ at the top of the screen then select ‘about Specialist Collections’. To view the collection, select ‘Search Specialist Collections’.

#### QIPP

The QIPP (Quality, Innovation, Productivity and Prevention) section of NHS Evidence provides examples of innovative practice, grouped into different areas of care. To view, click on ‘QIPP’ at the top of the screen then select the area you want.

#### Advanced healthcare databases (e.g. Medline and Embase)

Healthcare databases such as Medline and Embase provide bibliographic details of thousands of individual journal articles. The databases can be searched to identify relevant articles.

Where possible, use evaluated information such as evidence-based reviews and guidelines. Searching healthcare databases requires you then to evaluate the information you find. If you are unable to find evaluated information to meet your needs it may be appropriate to refer the question to a Medicines Information centre.

Access to these resources requires an NHS Athens username and password. See ‘How to register’ towards the start of this guide. To access the databases click on ‘NHS Athens Resources’ at the top of the screen, then select ‘Healthcare Databases’ from the pull-down list.

Training on how to use these databases may be available from your local NHS library or Medicines Information department.

#### E-books

Some reference books are available electronically via NHS Evidence. Examples include the Maudsley Prescribing Guidelines and the Oxford Handbook of Palliative Care.

To access them, click on ‘NHS Athens Resources’ at the top of the screen, then select ‘E-Books’. You will be prompted to enter your NHS Athens username and password.
You can search for a book using title, or browse using a particular category.

Texts relating to medicines are mainly in the sections ‘Therapeutics & Pharmacology’ and ‘Pharmacy & Materia medica’. These sections are not always visible in the list, in which case use the search box to find the book you want.

Direct links to some texts that provide information about medicines are provided below. In order to access the texts, you will be prompted to enter a username and password; click on ‘Click here to access the Athens authentication point’ and then enter your NHS Athens username and password.

- Basic and Clinical Pharmacology, Katzung (2009)
- Goodman & Gilman’s The Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics (2005)
- Oxford Handbook of Palliative Care (2009)
- Oxford Handbook of Reproductive Medicines and Family Planning (2008)

E-journals

Access to full-text articles from some journals is available to NHS staff through NHS Evidence. You need an NHS Athens username and password to access these resources. See ‘How to register’ towards the start of this guide.

You must have details of the journal article you require before you start. The E-journals facility is not a substitute for healthcare databases.

To access full text journal articles click on ‘NHS Athens Resources’ at the top of the screen then select E-journals. Click on ‘Athens login’ in the top right hand corner of the screen and enter your username and password. Use the search boxes provided to enter information about the journal article you require: name, volume and page number.

Not all journal articles are available via NHS Evidence. If you can’t find what you want, contact your local NHS library.
Limitations:

While every effort is made to ensure this guide is accurate at the time of publication, modifications and improvements to the NHS Evidence website are expected. This guide will be updated in due course.

Quality Assurance

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