



MEDLINE



Search Guide



Searching MEDLINE (via Ovid)

Medline is an international biomedical bibliographic database indexing over 4,600 journals from 1946 to the present. Areas covered include medicine, nursing, dentistry, health care systems and public health.

Searching the database

1. Developing a Search Strategy

Before you begin searching you will need to develop a search strategy. This involves analysing the search topic and identifying the main concepts. Each concept may then have a number of different search terms which can describe that concept.

Example Search Topic: How important is handwashing during the Covid-19 outbreak?

Looking at the example search topic, the main concepts are: "Handwashing" and "Covid-19".

You can sometimes have several search terms for a concept, i.e.: synonyms or alternative descriptions.

In this example, the concept of "Handwashing" has 2 possible terms: Handwashing and Hand Hygiene and the concept of "Covid-19" has 2 possible terms as well: "Covid-19" and "coronavirus". All are outlined in the table below

Example of Concepts & Search Terms:

	Concept 1	Concept 2
	HANDWASHING	COVID-19
Search Term	Handwashing	Covid-19
Search Term	Hand Hygiene	Coronavirus

2. Database Search Options

There are two main ways of searching databases: **subject heading search** or **keyword search**.

- ❖ **Subject heading searching** allows you to find articles on a particular subject without having to search for every possible phrase or word that an author may have used to describe that subject. It will usually get you fewer but **more relevant results**, than the keyword option.
- ❖ **Keyword searching** is looking for a word or phrase appearing within a citation, so you will usually retrieve lots of results, however they may include a lot of **irrelevant hits**. You also need to think of different terms and spelling that the author may have used to describe that topic, example: smoke, smokes, smokers, smoking, smoked, tobacco. (Keyword searching is described on page 11).

3. Access MEDLINE via Ovid

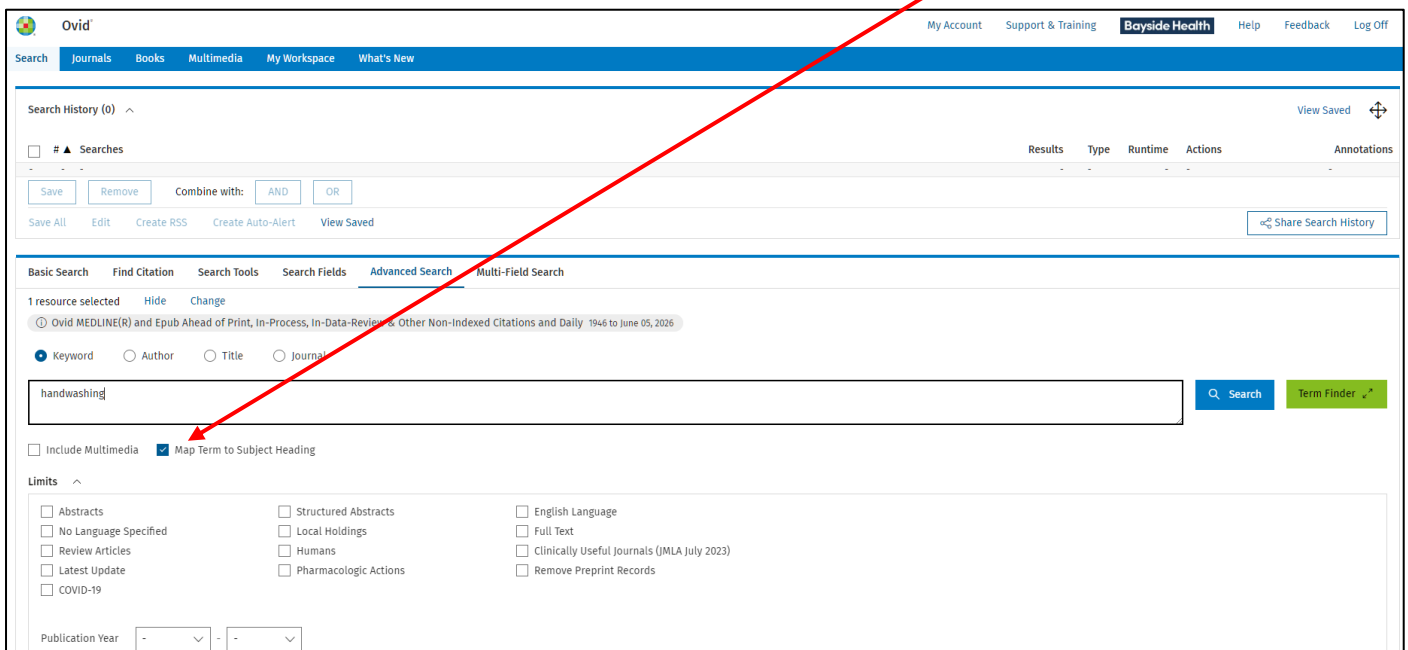
Open the Library's Website at <http://www.alfredlibrary.org>

Go to the Resources page and click on the **Medline (Ovid)** link, under "Databases".

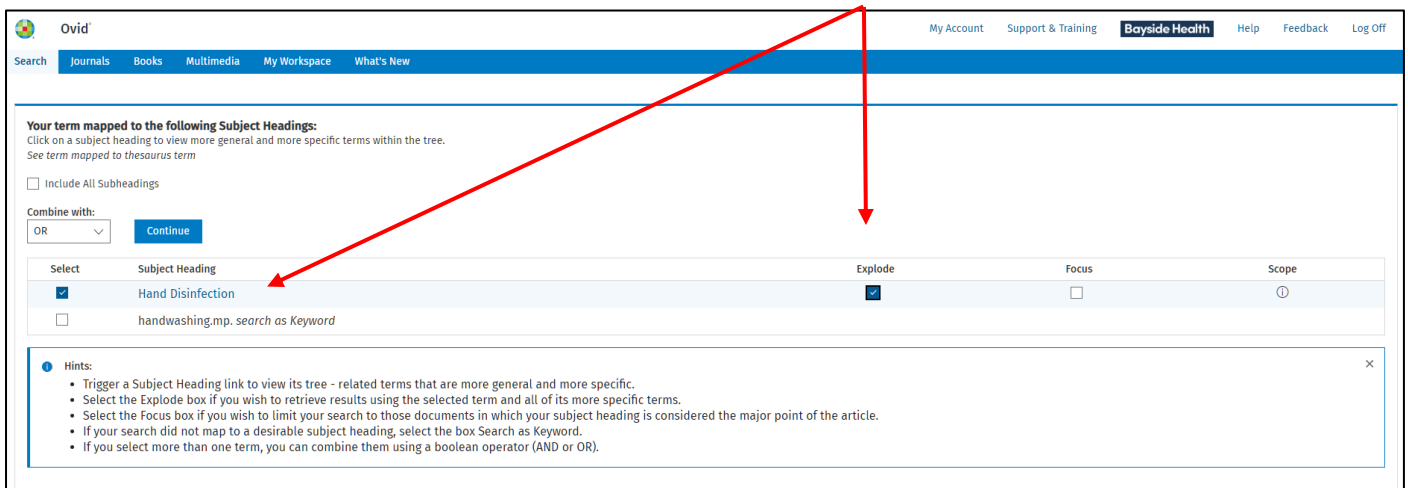
NB: For University staff and students, access to Medline may also be available via your University Library's website.

4. Type your first search term (handwashing) into the search box, then click on the search button.

Notice that the “Map Term to Subject Heading” box is ticked, so you are doing a SUBJECT HEADING search. This will map the term **handwashing** to the subject headings within the database.



5. Select a subject heading from those suggested and tick the Explode box alongside it. Note that the system has mapped “handwashing” to the preferred subject of Hand Disinfection. It is underlined and in blue writing, which denotes it as a subject heading from the thesaurus.



- ❖ The **Explode** option means that you will search on this subject, plus any more specific subject terms from the thesaurus.
- ❖ The **Focus** option allows you to retrieve only those articles where this subject heading is the major focus of the article. If you wish, you can select both Explode and Focus.

6. Click on the **Continue** button

7. Subheading Display.

Tick **“Include All Subheadings”** (this is also the default option).

If required, you could select those subheadings that are most appropriate. However, beware of reducing your results too soon. Then, click on the **Continue** button.

The screenshot shows the Ovid search interface. At the top, there are navigation links: Search Tools, My Account, Support & Training, Bayside Health, Help, Feedback, and Log Off. Below the navigation bar, there are tabs for Journals, Books, Multimedia, My Workspace, and What's New. The main content area displays 'Subheadings for: exp Hand Disinfection'. Under 'Combine with:', there is a dropdown menu set to 'OR' and a 'Continue' button. Below this, there is a checkbox labeled 'Include All Subheadings' which is checked. Below the checkbox, there is a list of subheadings with checkboxes: /ec - Economics, /is - Instrumentation, /st - Standards, /hi - History, /mt - Methods, and /td - Trends. Two red arrows point from the 'Continue' button and the 'Include All Subheadings' checkbox to the right.

8. Now you have a set of results for Hand Disinfection.

The screenshot shows the Ovid search interface. At the top, there are navigation links: My Account, Support & Training, Bayside Health, Help, Feedback, and Log Off. Below the navigation bar, there are tabs for Journals, Books, Multimedia, My Workspace, and What's New. The main content area displays 'Search History (1)'. Below this, there is a table with columns: #, Searches, Results, Type, Runtime, Actions, and Annotations. The table has one row: 1, exp Hand Disinfection/, 6697, Advanced, 3.37, Display Results, More, and a trash icon. Below the table, there are buttons for Save, Remove, and a 'Combine with:' dropdown menu set to 'AND'. There are also buttons for Save All, Edit, Create RSS, Create Auto-Alert, and View Saved. A 'Share Search History' button is at the bottom right. A red arrow points from the top left towards the search history table.

9. You can now enter your next search term **Hand Hygiene** into the Search Box. The system will map the term to the suitable subject heading

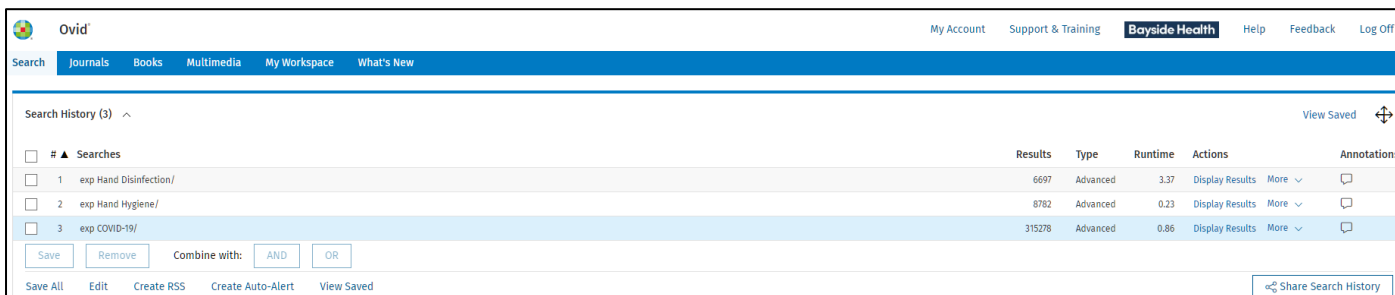
10. Repeat steps 5 to 7. You will then have results for Hand Hygiene added to the Search History.

The screenshot shows the Ovid search interface. At the top, there are navigation links: My Account, Support & Training, Bayside Health, Help, Feedback, and Log Off. Below the navigation bar, there are tabs for Journals, Books, Multimedia, My Workspace, and What's New. The main content area displays 'Search History (2)'. Below this, there is a table with columns: #, Searches, Results, Type, Runtime, Actions, and Annotations. The table has two rows: 1, exp Hand Disinfection/, 6697, Advanced, 3.37, Display Results, More, and a trash icon; 2, exp Hand Hygiene/, 8782, Advanced, 0.23, Display Results, More, and a trash icon. Below the table, there are buttons for Save, Remove, and a 'Combine with:' dropdown menu set to 'AND'.

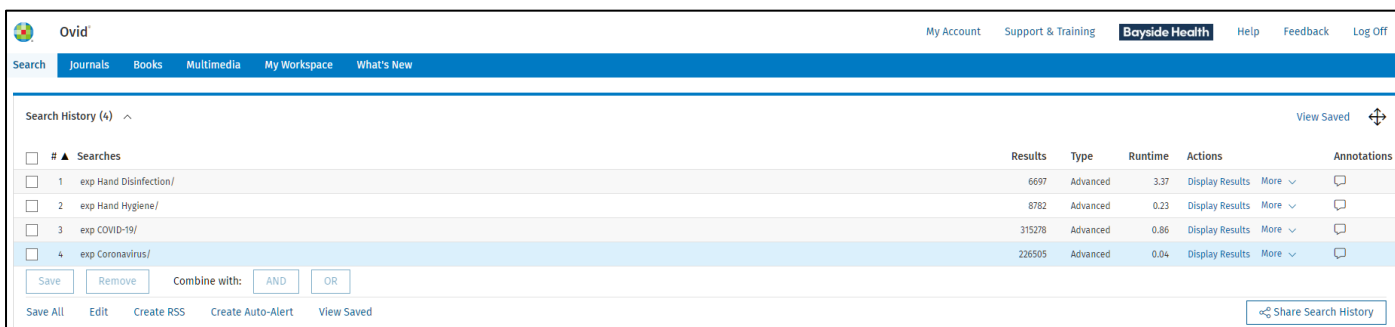
11. You can now enter your next search term (**covid-19**) into the search box. The system will map the term to the suitable subject heading.

The screenshot shows the Ovid search interface. At the top, there are navigation links: My Account, Support & Training, Bayside Health, Help, Feedback, and Log Off. Below the navigation bar, there are tabs for Journals, Books, Multimedia, My Workspace, and What's New. The main content area displays 'Your term mapped to the following Subject Headings:'. Below this, there is a checkbox labeled 'Include All Subheadings' which is unchecked. Under 'Combine with:', there is a dropdown menu set to 'OR' and a 'Continue' button. Below this, there is a table with columns: Select, Subject Heading, Explode, Focus, and Scope. The table has one row: [checked], COVID-19, [checked], [unchecked], [dropdown]. Two red arrows point from the top left towards the 'Continue' button and the 'COVID-19' row.

12. Repeat steps 5 to 7. You will then have results for Covid-19 added to the Search History.



13. You can now enter your next search term (coronavirus) into the search box and repeat steps 5 to 7. You will then have results for Coronavirus added to the Search History.



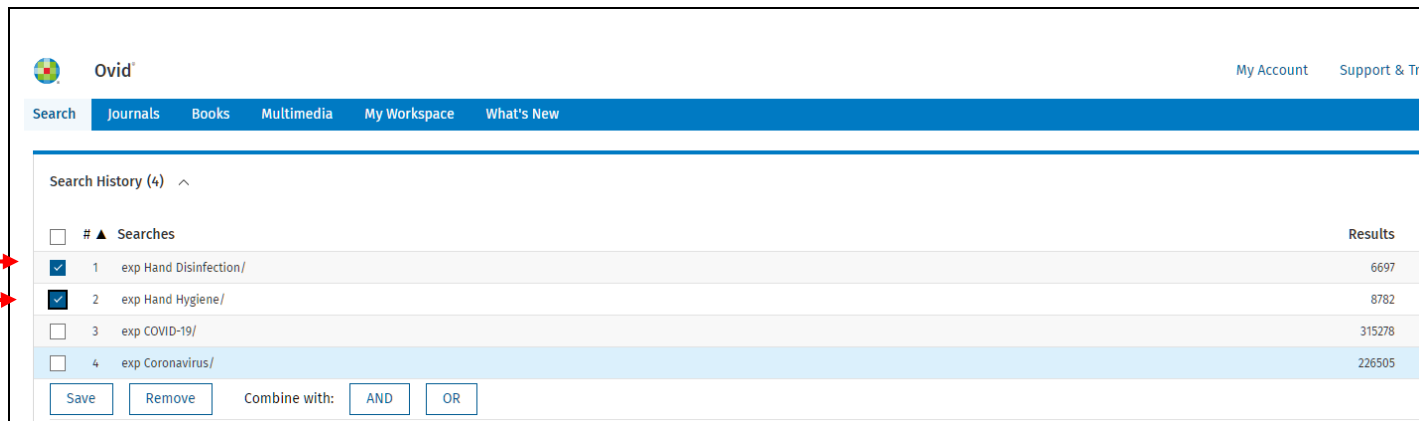
You now have four search sets:

- ❖ Set one and two for the first concept of Handwashing,
- ❖ Sets three and four for the second concept of Covid-19.

These search sets now need to be combined to obtain your final result.

14. To combine your search sets, please refer to the Search History.

We will first work on the **handwashing** concept as there are two terms for this.



Select both sets by clicking the boxes in the first column on the left hand side. A tick will appear once selected.

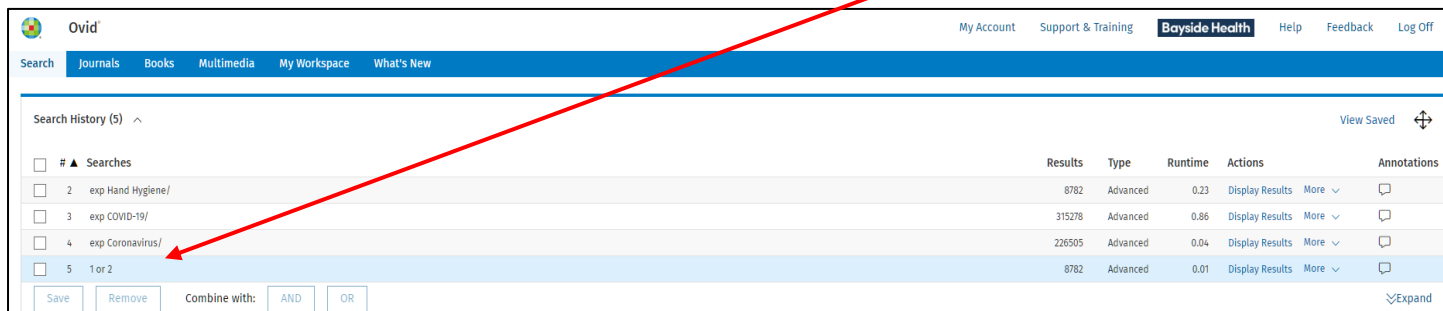
Combine with:

At the bottom of the Search History, you will see:

The OR operator is used when combining alternatives

Click on the  button.

This gives you a set of records that contain either “Hand Disinfection” or “Hand Hygiene”.

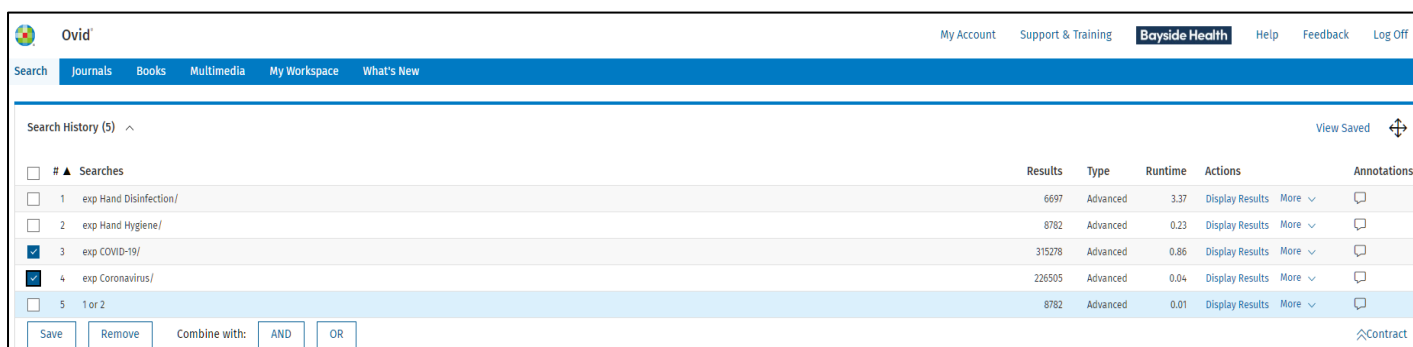


The screenshot shows the Ovid search interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs: Search, Journals, Books, Multimedia, My Workspace, and What's New. Below this is a search history table with 5 entries. A red arrow points to the 5th entry, '1 or 2', which has 8782 results. At the bottom right of the table, there is an 'Expand' link.

#	Searches	Results	Type	Runtime	Actions	Annotations
1	exp Hand Disinfection/	6697	Advanced	3.37	Display Results More	
2	exp Hand Hygiene/	8782	Advanced	0.23	Display Results More	
3	exp COVID-19/	315278	Advanced	0.86	Display Results More	
4	exp Coronavirus/	226505	Advanced	0.04	Display Results More	
5	1 or 2	8782	Advanced	0.01	Display Results More	


Note: The search history defaults to display only 4 sets. To see all the sets in the search history, click on the link to Expand.

15. Repeat step 14 for the second concept, **covid-19**, as there are two terms for this. Select both sets by clicking the boxes in the first column on the left hand side.

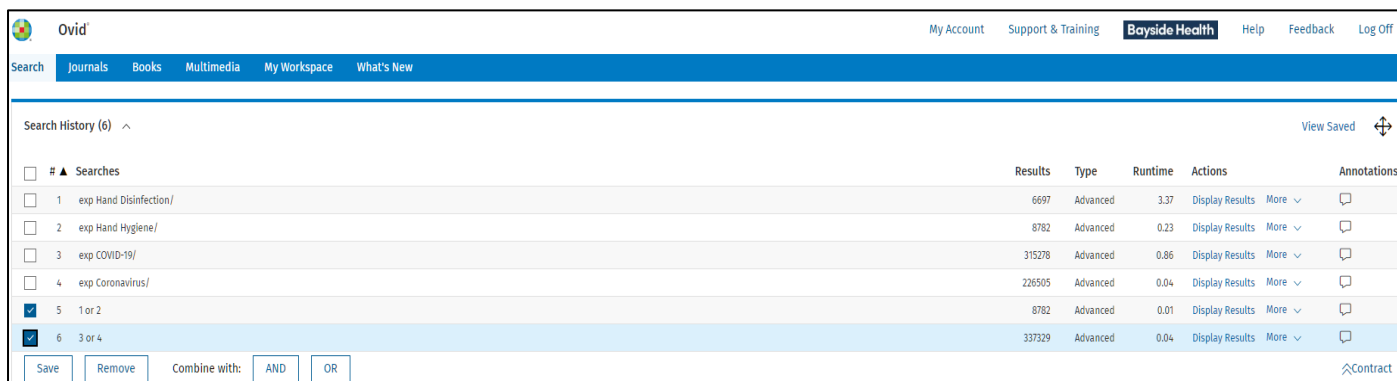


The screenshot shows the Ovid search interface. In the search history table, the checkboxes for search sets 3 ('exp COVID-19/') and 4 ('exp Coronavirus/') are checked. The 'Combine with' buttons at the bottom show 'AND' and 'OR'.

#	Searches	Results	Type	Runtime	Actions	Annotations
1	exp Hand Disinfection/	6697	Advanced	3.37	Display Results More	
2	exp Hand Hygiene/	8782	Advanced	0.23	Display Results More	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3 exp COVID-19/	315278	Advanced	0.86	Display Results More	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4 exp Coronavirus/	226505	Advanced	0.04	Display Results More	
5	1 or 2	8782	Advanced	0.01	Display Results More	

Click on the  button to combine

16. We can now combine the two concepts together.



The screenshot shows the Ovid search interface. In the search history table, the checkboxes for search sets 5 ('1 or 2') and 6 ('3 or 4') are checked. Red arrows point to these checkboxes. The 'Combine with' buttons at the bottom show 'AND' and 'OR'.

#	Searches	Results	Type	Runtime	Actions	Annotations
1	exp Hand Disinfection/	6697	Advanced	3.37	Display Results More	
2	exp Hand Hygiene/	8782	Advanced	0.23	Display Results More	
3	exp COVID-19/	315278	Advanced	0.86	Display Results More	
4	exp Coronavirus/	226505	Advanced	0.04	Display Results More	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5 1 or 2	8782	Advanced	0.01	Display Results More	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6 3 or 4	337329	Advanced	0.04	Display Results More	

Select the relevant sets by ticking the boxes in the left hand column

Combine with:

At the bottom of the Search History, you will see:

The AND operator is used when putting concepts together.

Click on the button.

#	Searches	Results	Type	Runtime	Actions	Annotations
1	exp Hand Disinfection/	6697	Advanced	3.37	Display Results More	
2	exp Hand Hygiene/	8782	Advanced	0.23	Display Results More	
3	exp COVID-19/	315278	Advanced	0.86	Display Results More	
4	exp Coronavirus/	226505	Advanced	0.04	Display Results More	
5	1 or 2	8782	Advanced	0.01	Display Results More	
6	3 or 4	337329	Advanced	0.04	Display Results More	
7	5 and 6	794	Advanced	0.08	Display Results More	

This gives you a set of records that will contain both concepts. That is, set 7 now has results which will include (Hand Disinfection or Hand Hygiene) and (Covid-19 or Coronavirus).

17. You can limit the last set in the search history by using the Limits below the search box.

For example, in the following screen we have ticked English Language (1) and selected the years 2020 to current in the publication year boxes (2). After making your selections click on the search button (3) and the limits will be applied to the last set in the search history. In the example below, the limits will be applied to set 7.

Search History (7) View Saved

#	Searches	Results	Type	Runtime	Actions	Annotations
1	exp Hand Disinfection/	6697	Advanced	3.37	Display Results More	
2	exp Hand Hygiene/	8782	Advanced	0.23	Display Results More	
3	exp COVID-19/	315278	Advanced	0.86	Display Results More	
4	exp Coronavirus/	226505	Advanced	0.04	Display Results More	
5	1 or 2	8782	Advanced	0.01	Display Results More	
6	3 or 4	337329	Advanced	0.04	Display Results More	
7	5 and 6	794	Advanced	0.08	Display Results More	

Save Remove Combine with:

Save All Edit Create RSS Create Auto-Alert View Saved Share Search History

Basic Search Find Citation Search Tools Search Fields **Advanced Search** Multi-Field Search

1 resource selected Hide Change

Ovid MEDLINE(R) and Epub Ahead of Print, In-Process, In-Data-Review & Other Non-Indexed Citations and Daily 1946 to June 05, 2026

Keyword Author Title Journal

Enter keyword or phrase (* or \$ for truncation) Search Term Finder

Include Multimedia Map Term to Subject Heading

Limits

Abstracts Structured Abstracts English Language 1

No Language Specified Local Holdings Full Text 3

Review Articles Humans Clinically Useful Journals (JMLA July 2023)

Latest Update Pharmacologic Actions Remove Preprint Records

COVID-19

Publication Year 2020 - Current 2

Additional Limits Edit Limits

18. Click on the **Display Results** link next to the results you wish to view.

The first lot of results is **displayed**. The results are in citation format, and any links to full text, complete reference or abstract reference are displayed on the right hand side of the screen.

The screenshot shows a search results interface with the following elements:

- Search Information:** Search terms include 'coronavirus', 'covid-19', 'hand', 'disinfection', and 'hygiene'. 79% of text results are returned.
- Results List:**
 - Item 1:** "Prosocial versus self-interested appeals in offline health communication: A randomized trial of framed messages during the COVID-19 pandemic in Switzerland." Authors: Kulle AC, Schumacher S, von Bieberstein F. Includes links for Abstract Reference, Complete Reference, Find Similar, and Find Citing Articles.
 - Item 2:** "The impact of COVID-19 infection experience on risk perception and preventive behaviour: a cohort study." Authors: Murakami M, Yamagata M, Miura A. Includes links for Abstract Reference, Complete Reference, Find Similar, Find Citing Articles, and **Full Text** (circled in red).
 - Item 3:** "Clostridioides difficile infections in seven Brazilian hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic: hand hygiene and antimicrobial consumption." Authors: Goncalves LA, Santos ILD, Porto APM, Viana Junior AB, Carijo JH, Carilho CDM, Coцентino BCB, Passos LN, Varkulja GF, Guimaraes T, Costa SF. Includes links for Abstract Reference, Complete Reference, Find Similar, Find Citing Articles, and **Full Text** (circled in red).
 - Item 4:** "Shifting drivers: a longitudinal analysis of hand hygiene compliance in a dental hospital from the COVID-19 pandemic to the postpandemic era." Authors: Fan X, Zhu J, Zhang M, Zhang H. Includes links for Abstract Reference, Complete Reference, Find Similar, and Find Citing Articles.
- Customize Display:** Filter by years (All Years, Current year, Past 3 years, Past 5 years) and subject (Journal, Publication Type).

Note: the Complete Reference is not the Full Text - it is a link to all the fields contained in the record for that reference. These fields include the citation, as well as a list of all the **subject headings** that have been applied to that citation. This can be a useful feature when searching for alternative terms for a concept.

Hint: To display the abstracts on your results page, click on this button (just above your first citation)

The screenshot shows the search interface with the 'View' button (list icon) highlighted by a red arrow pointing to it from the text above.

19. To select a citation for printing, saving etc., tick the box next to it.

At the bottom of the page, use the **< Previous | Next >** to go forwards and backwards through the results list.

20. When you've finished selecting your citations, click on the **Keep Selected** link. This allows you to make a new set in the search history of the results that you selected.

#	Searches	Results	Type	Runtime	Actions	Annotations
1	exp Hand Disinfection/	6697	Advanced	3.37	Display Results More	
2	exp Hand Hygiene/	8782	Advanced	0.23	Display Results More	
3	exp COVID-19/	315278	Advanced	0.86	Display Results More	
4	exp Coronavirus/	228505	Advanced	0.04	Display Results More	
5	1 or 2	8782	Advanced	0.01	Display Results More	
6	3 or 4	337329	Advanced	0.04	Display Results More	
7	5 and 6	794	Advanced	0.08	Display Results More	
8	from 7 keep 2-6, 8-9, 12, 14-17	12	Advanced	0.00	Display Results More	

Buttons at the bottom: Save, Remove, Combine with: AND, OR, Contract, Share Search History.

21. Output Choices



Output choices, **Print**, **Email**, **Export**, or **+ My Projects (Add to My Projects)** are at the top and bottom of each results page. Choose from the following:

Print:

- **Select Fields to Display:** Choose from preset options or create a custom list
- **Select Citation Style:** Choose from **Ovid Labeled Citation** or choose another style (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.)
- **Include:** Tick **Search History** to include the search history.

Email:

To: type in address.

Add **Subject** title and Message (if required)

Consider also: Select Fields to Display, Select Citation Style, and Include Search History as mentioned above

Export:

- Use **Microsoft® Word** format for word processing
- Use **Citavi/EndNote®/ProCite®/Reference Manager®** for local reference management
- Use **Reprint/Medlars** for importing .txt files into EndNote

My Projects:

My Projects is a research organization area containing projects and folders where you may store text, results, citations, full text, graphics and many other items. **My Projects** also offers the output options (**Print**, **Email** or **Export**) and the option to **Remove** (delete) saved items if required.

To use My Projects, you will need to set up an account (see next section on Personal Account).

Select items using the checkboxes and choose the **+ My Projects** link at the top and bottom of each page and follow any prompts. You will need to create a project or select an existing project or folder.

Or click the **My Projects** link at the bottom of each individual result or item.



22. Personal Account

A Personal Account provides access to **My Workspace** that contains **My Projects**, **My Searches & Alerts** and **My eTocs**. Your account also stores your annotations and any interface settings. If you wish to add to, or access any of these areas, you must login with your Personal Account ID and password.

Ovid displays a My Account link on the session



You will need to login to your personal account to access selected functions. Functions which require personal account login are:

- Saved Searches and Alerts
- My Projects
- Annotate items
- Retention of customized displays and settings

Click on the **My Account** link to login.

If you haven't created an account yet, you can create one using the "Create Account" link.

Once your Personal Account is set up, you will be able to access saved searches and other folders by clicking on the [My Account](#) link to login.

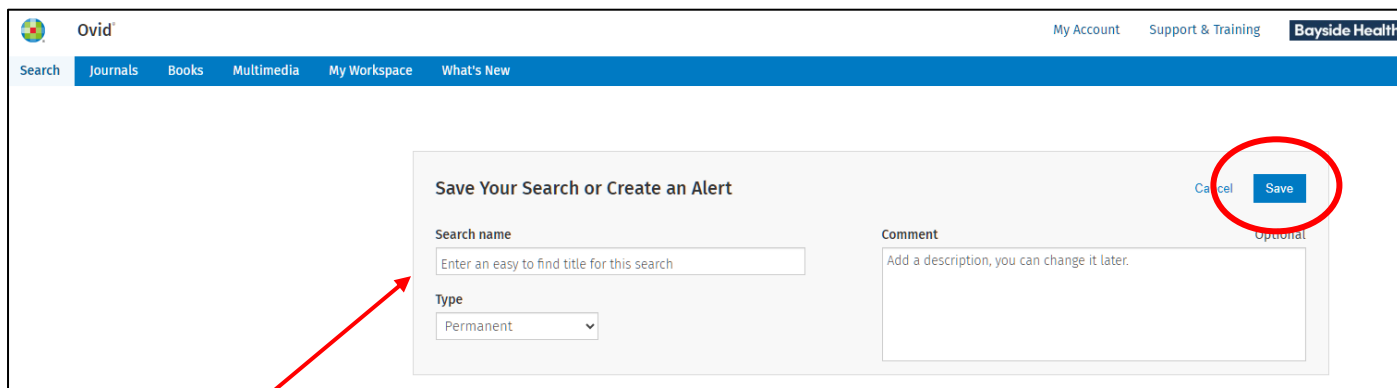
23. Saved Searches and Alerts

As you develop search strategies, you may want to save them for later use. Ovid lets you store search sets created during any search session, log off and return at a later time without having to retype each search set manually.

[Save All](#)

Save your searches by clicking the [Save All](#) button at the bottom of the *Search History* window.

After logging in, fill in the following boxes to save your search:

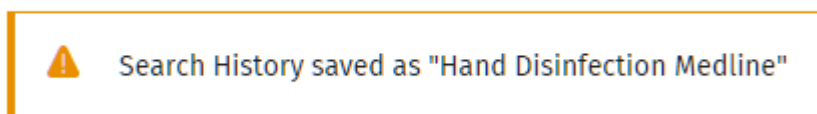


1. Type a search name in the text box. (search name must not exceed 80 characters)
2. Type comments in the text box. (This is OPTIONAL)
3. The default search type is Permanent.
4. Click the **Save** button.

The different types of saved searches are:

- ◆ **Permanent** - Saves the search for as long as your site maintains a valid subscription. Use this option to save and rerun at another time.
- ◆ **Temporary** - Saves the search for a period of twenty-four hours, then deletes it.
- ◆ **AutoAlert** - Creates a search that runs automatically on a regular basis and emails results to designated recipients.

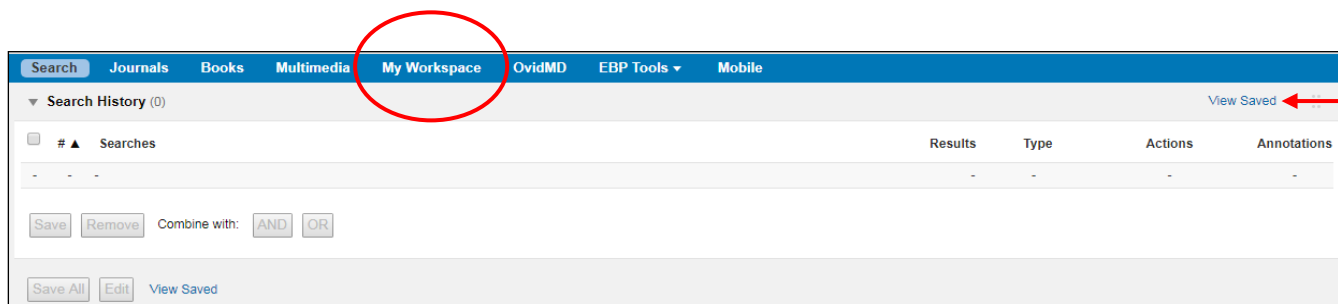
Ovid displays a confirmation message at the top of the Search page once you have saved your search. For example:



24. Accessing Saved Searches

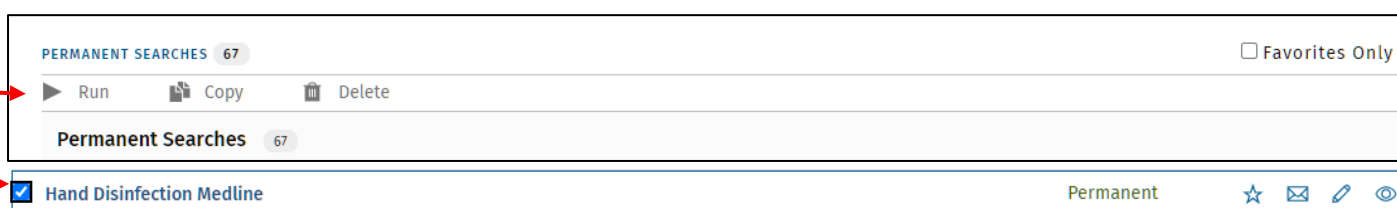
You may view and access your Saved Searches and alerts by clicking on [View Saved](#).

Alternatively you can click on [My Workspace](#). You may need to log in again if you have previously logged off.



When you select either of these options, the system will display all your saved searches organized by search type.

To access your saved search, tick the box next to it and then click on the [Run](#) button.



25. Keyword (Textword) Searching

If your subject heading search does not map to a suitable term, try searching with keywords (also known as textwords). Textword searching lets you search for the exact word or phrase in a chosen field such as title or abstract. It is useful for finding information about a concept that:

- has no appropriate subject heading
- might be very new to the literature
- has a very specific name, such as the GUSTO Trials

❖ Textword field searching

The textword command **.mp.** tells Ovid that you are looking for a textword and therefore bypasses the subject mapping system. The **.mp.** command will look for the word in the title, abstract, and as a subject heading word.

❖ Truncation & Wildcards

Textwords can be truncated to pick up various forms of a word. Truncation is useful if the textword or phrase can be expressed in a variety of ways. Use the asterisk ***** to indicate where the word should be truncated, followed by the **.mp.** command, to indicate that you want to search a textword, not a subject heading.

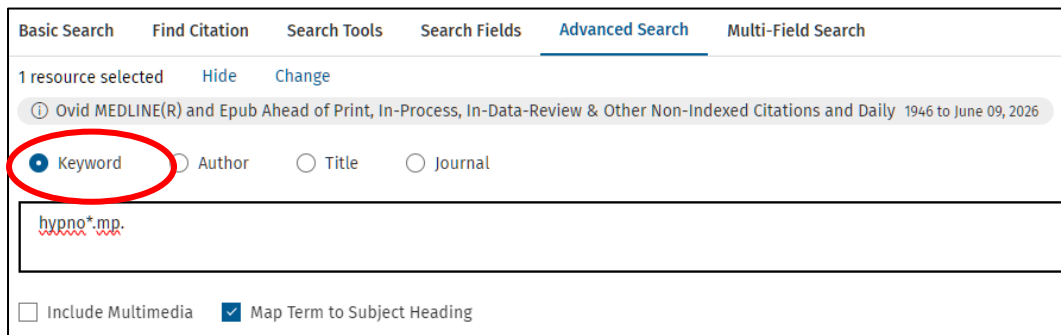
Wildcards can be used to find word/spelling variations.

- Use ***** at the end of a word or part of a word to retrieve unlimited suffix variations eg. disease* for diseases or diseased.
- Use **#** inside or at the end of a word to replace exactly one character eg. wom#n.
- Use **?** inside or at the end of a word to replace zero or one character eg. robot? or flavo?r.

Truncation example:

The following screen shows a textword search for **hypno*.mp.**

This will retrieve words such as hypnosis, hypnotic, hypnotism, hypnotise etc.



The screenshot shows the Ovid search interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs: Basic Search, Find Citation, Search Tools, Search Fields, **Advanced Search**, and Multi-Field Search. Below the tabs, it says "1 resource selected" with "Hide" and "Change" links. A search bar contains the text "Ovid MEDLINE(R) and Epub Ahead of Print, In-Process, In-Data-Review & Other Non-Indexed Citations and Daily 1946 to June 09, 2026". Below the search bar, there are radio buttons for "Keyword", "Author", "Title", and "Journal". The "Keyword" radio button is selected and circled in red. Below the radio buttons, there is a text input field containing "hypno*.mp.". At the bottom, there are checkboxes for "Include Multimedia" (unchecked) and "Map Term to Subject Heading" (checked).

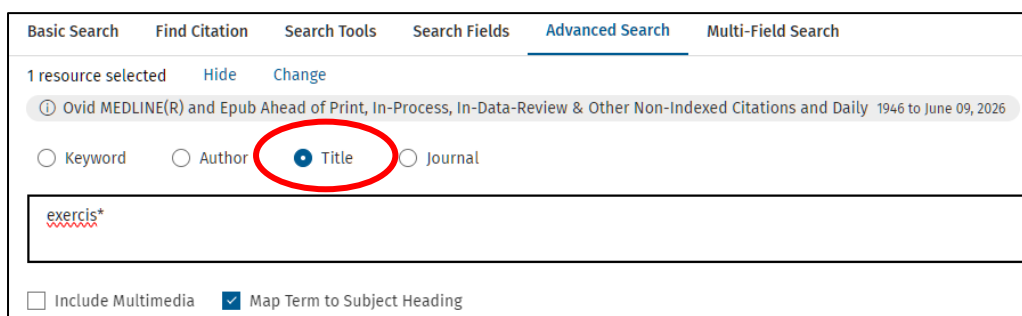
❖ Title Field

If the textword field option is too broad, that is, too many results are retrieved; you can choose to search for a word in the title field. To perform a Title field search, select the radio button next to Title. Remember to use truncation for word variations.

For example:

The following screen shows a title field search for the truncated word **exercis*.**

This will retrieve words such as exercise, exercised, exercises, exercising etc. in the title.



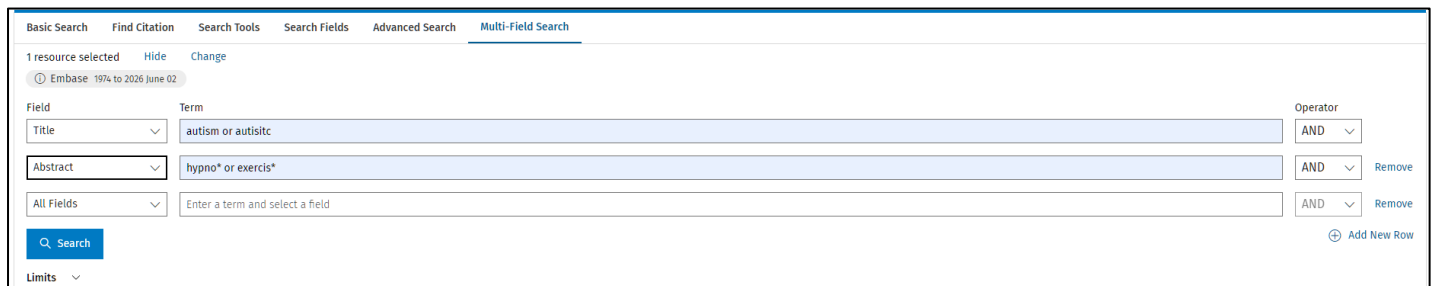
The screenshot shows the Ovid search interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs: Basic Search, Find Citation, Search Tools, Search Fields, **Advanced Search**, and Multi-Field Search. Below the tabs, it says "1 resource selected" with "Hide" and "Change" links. A search bar contains the text "Ovid MEDLINE(R) and Epub Ahead of Print, In-Process, In-Data-Review & Other Non-Indexed Citations and Daily 1946 to June 09, 2026". Below the search bar, there are radio buttons for "Keyword", "Author", "Title", and "Journal". The "Title" radio button is selected and circled in red. Below the radio buttons, there is a text input field containing "exercis*.". At the bottom, there are checkboxes for "Include Multimedia" (unchecked) and "Map Term to Subject Heading" (checked).

❖ Multi-Field Search

To access the **Multi-Field Search** area, click on the tab located next to Advanced Search.



You can use **Multi-Field Search** to search multiple terms in specific fields and combine your terms using your choice of **AND** or **OR** Boolean operators.



Enter a word or phrase in the search box. Select a field to search from the adjacent pull down menu. Search a single term in a specific field, or enter a second or third term to be searched in specific fields in the search boxes provided. Remember to use truncation or wildcard symbols where appropriate.

Please ask a Librarian for any assistance with database searching.

26. Accessing the full text of your citations.

For those citations that do not have a full text link available, you will have to check the library's holdings. There is a listing for the online journals on the library webpage: <http://www.alfredlibrary.org>

For articles that are not held by The Ian Potter Library, a document delivery service may be available. Please check with the library to see what document delivery services are available to you.

For further information please contact the library on 90763042 or library@alfred.org.au

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