

Why would you use Subject Terms in CINAHL?

The CINAHL Subject terms also known as CINAHL Subject Headings are a list of words or phrases that use controlled vocabulary to describe specific concepts and are added to the records of every reference in the database. So, for example, this means that references discussing handwashing will have the 'handwashing' subject heading. Searching using subject headings will retrieve references on a topic regardless of the wording used by individual authors (eg hand hygiene). However not all concepts have a CINAHL heading assigned to them and there is some delay in adding the subject terms so newly added references may not have subject terms.

Used in conjunction with keywords they can help you retrieve all the relevant articles on a topic. To retrieve the same amount of results using keywords as retrieved in the subject term search, every alternative spelling and synonyms must also be taken into account.

- Click in the box next to Suggest Subject terms. Enter your first term and click the search button.



Search: CINAHL Complete Choose Databases

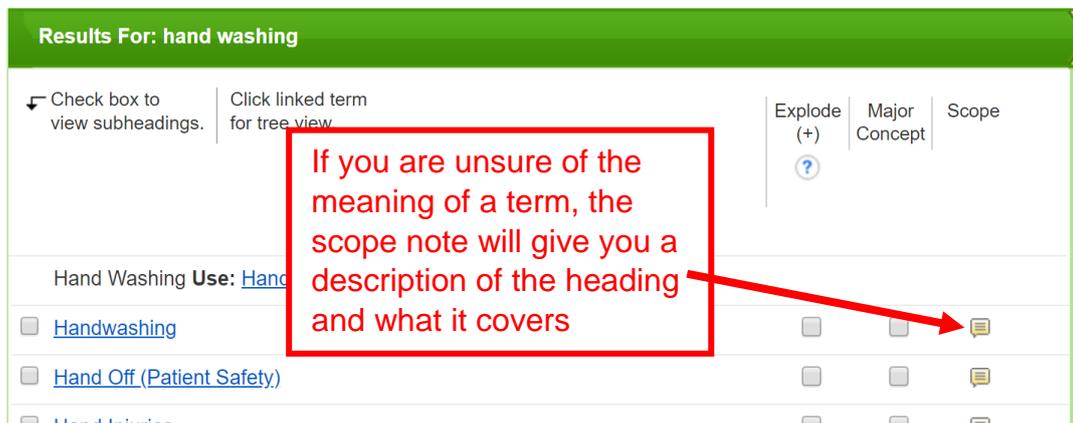
Suggest Subject Terms

hand washing

Select a Field (optional) Search

AND Select a Field (optional) Clear ?

- A list of possible subject headings will appear.



Results For: hand washing

Check box to view subheadings. Click linked term for tree view.

Explode (+) Major Concept Scope

Hand Washing Use: [Handwashing](#)

[Handwashing](#)

[Hand Off \(Patient Safety\)](#)

[Hand Injuries](#)

If you are unsure of the meaning of a term, the scope note will give you a description of the heading and what it covers

Tree structure

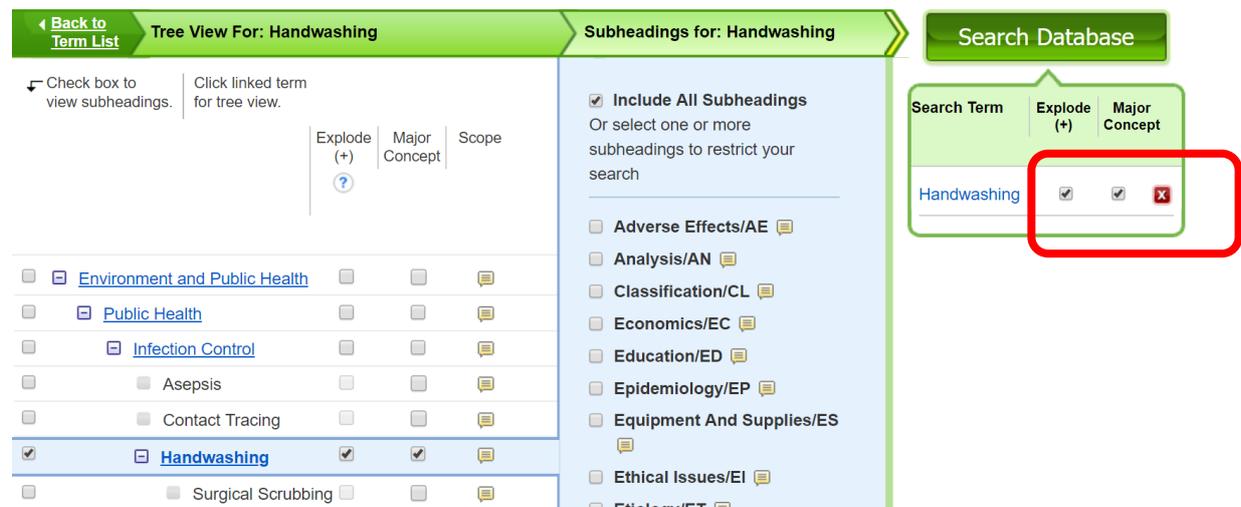
Clicking on a heading will take you to the tree structure, which shows where the heading sits in the context of other headings. You can choose more general, more specific, or a combination of headings that look relevant to your search term

Explode and Major Concept

For your chosen heading(s), you have the option to explode the heading(s), make the heading(s) a major concept, or both.

- Explode includes your selected subject heading and more specific headings. This will increase the number of results.
- Major Concept retrieves references that have this subject heading as their main topic. This will find fewer results, but with higher relevance.
- Both includes your selected subject heading as well as more specific headings, and only retrieves references that have any of these headings as their main topic. This broadens the scope of the search, while also increasing the specificity of the results.

Tick the relevant boxes as appropriate:



The screenshot shows the search interface for 'Handwashing'. The 'Tree View For: Handwashing' section shows a tree structure with 'Handwashing' selected. The 'Subheadings for: Handwashing' section shows a list of subheadings with 'Include All Subheadings' checked. The 'Search Database' section shows a table with columns for 'Search Term', 'Explode (+)', and 'Major Concept'. The 'Handwashing' row has both 'Explode (+)' and 'Major Concept' checked, and this row is highlighted with a red box.

Search Term	Explode (+)	Major Concept
Handwashing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

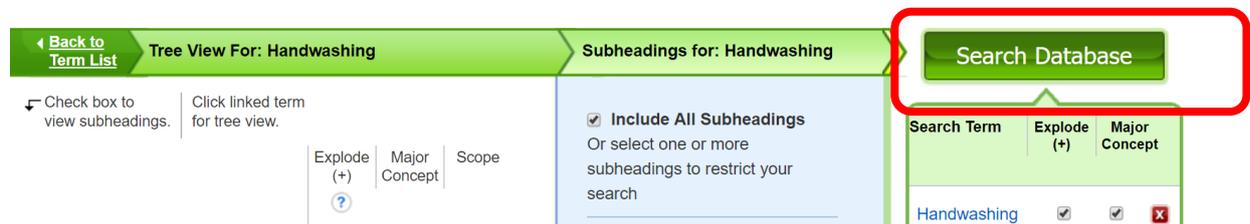
Subheadings

The default option is to **Include all subheadings**. This will ensure you see all of the results for your chosen subject heading, and is the option we recommend for the majority of searches.

You have the option to narrow your results further by selecting specific subheadings from the list. However, this can be very restrictive and may cause you to miss relevant references. Use with caution.

Results

Once you have made your selections, click on the Search Database button in the top right corner:

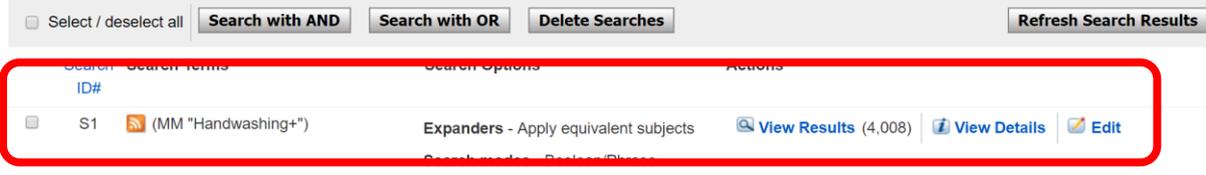


The screenshot shows a search interface with a green header. On the left, there is a 'Back to Term List' button and a 'Tree View For: Handwashing' section. In the center, there are options for 'Explo (+)', 'Major Concept', and 'Scope'. On the right, there is a 'Subheadings for: Handwashing' section with a checkbox for 'Include All Subheadings'. A red box highlights the 'Search Database' button in the top right corner.

The results will appear in your search history

Search History/Alerts

[Print Search History](#) [Retrieve Searches](#) [Retrieve Alerts](#) [Save Searches / Alerts](#)



The screenshot shows a search history table with columns for 'Search ID#', 'Search Terms', 'Search Options', and 'Actions'. A red box highlights the first entry, which has ID# 'S1' and search terms '(MM "Handwashing+")'. The search options include 'Expanders - Apply equivalent subjects'. The actions column contains links for 'View Results (4,008)', 'View Details', and 'Edit'.

Broaden your search using parallel searching

If your search does not produce enough results, you can broaden your search using the assigned subject headings. Click on the title of one of your results to view the full bibliographic details. Scroll down the screen to Major Subjects and Minor Subjects where you will see a list of all of the subject headings that this article has been indexed under in the CINAHL database. You can click on any of these subject headings to search for that topic, and this will automatically add the subject heading to your Search History. This is called parallel searching.



The screenshot shows a detailed record for the article 'Hand Hygiene in the Operating Room it's in your hands.' by Lee, Tracey. The page includes fields for Authors, Source, Publication Type, Language, Major Subjects, and Minor Subjects. A red box highlights the Major Subjects list with the text 'Click on a subject heading to retrieve all articles indexed under this term'. Red arrows point from this box to the subject headings 'Handwashing -- Methods' and 'Surgical Wound Infection -- Prevention and Control'.

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