PubMed Central

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PubMed Central® (PMC) was launched in 2000 as a free archive for full-text biomedical and life sciences journal literature at the U.S. National Institutes of Health’s National Library of Medicine (NIH/NLM).

Free access is a requirement for PMC deposit, but publishers and individual authors may continue to hold copyright on the material in PMC and publishers can delay the release of their material in PMC for a short period after publication. There are reciprocal links between the full text in PMC and corresponding citations in PubMed.

PMC also includes final, peer-reviewed author manuscripts by scientists and others who receive research funding from NIH and other funding agencies.

The PubReader view is an alternative web presentation that offers another, more reader-friendly way to read literature in PMC and Bookshelf. Designed particularly for enhancing readability on tablet and other small screen devices, PubReader can also be used on desktops and laptops and from multiple web browsers.

The PMC Journal List

There is a PMC Journal List where you can browse a list of journals that archive some or all of their contents in PMC.

The PMC Journal List includes:

- journal titles,
- ISSNs,
- holdings,
- and access and embargo information.

Why Search PMC?

Although they are interrelated, PubMed and PMC are two separate and unique resources. PubMed is a database of citations and abstracts for more than 26 million articles.

PMC is an archive containing over 3 million articles, most of which are indexed for PubMed.

For a comprehensive search, you would probably want to search both PubMed and PMC separately.
Here's why:

- PubMed searches only what appears in a PubMed record. It does not search full text.
- PubMed does not include citations for certain types of PMC material, such as book reviews, that are considered out of scope for PubMed.
- Some PMC articles published before 1966 do not have corresponding citations in PubMed.

Searching Help

Searching PMC is very similar to searching PubMed, and you will find detailed help in the PMC Help manual.

It includes examples for searching by subject, by author, by title, by journal name or ISSN, and by publication date.

There are also sections on Viewing Articles and Saving and Emailing Results and Searches.

Field Names

Although many of the field names are the same as PubMed they may work in slightly different ways, so it's a good idea to check. There are also some important additional options - for example:

- separate abstract searching (in PubMed abstracts can be searched only in combination with titles)
- searching within the full text of articles
- searching for key terms from the methods section of the article abstract
- searching for words in the reference lists of articles
- searching for authors in the reference lists of articles

When searching PMC it's important to specify where to look for words - titles of articles, abstracts, the indexing language of the database. To do this you need to use field names or codes.

PMC has a wide range of field codes, some of which are different from PubMed. Below is a selection of the more commonly used fields. A complete list can be found in the PMC help manual.
### Field Name Abbreviations

**Fields marked ♦ will retrieve ONLY PMC articles which have also been indexed for PubMed/Medline**

- **[ab]** to search for words in abstracts of articles
  - e.g. obesity[ab]
  - **Option not available in PubMed - abstracts can be searched only with titles [tiab]**

- **[article]** article body - all words - includes all words and numbers in the body of an article except for the Abstract and References.
  - **Option not available in PubMed**

- **[au]** Enter the last name followed by a space and up to the first two initials followed by a space. See **Author**

- **[kw]** article body - key terms - includes all key terms in the body of an article except for the Abstract and References.
  - **Option not available in PubMed**

- **[meth]** key terms from the methods section of the article abstract.
  - **Option not available in PubMed**

- **[mh]** to search for Mesh terms ♦
  - e.g. obesity[mh] This search will include not only the term Obesity, but the more specific terms in the list below it. This is called “exploding” terms, and is PMC’s default setting.

- **[mh:noexp]** if you don’t want to explode the search term ♦
  - e.g. economics[mh:noexp] will search only for the term Economics, not the more specific terms in the list below it

- **[maj]** to restrict your search to major indexing terms only ♦
  - e.g. obesity[maj]

- **[ref]** includes words and numbers in the titles in an article references section.
  - **Option not available in PubMed**

- **[refa]** includes authors cited in an article references section. (The format to search for a reference author is the same as article Author searching. See **Author**)
  - **Option not available in PubMed**

- **[sect]** includes words and numbers in an article section title.
  - **Option not available in PubMed**

- **[sh]** MeSH Subheadings ♦
  - Used with MeSH terms to help describe more completely a particular aspect of a subject - for example neoplasms/diagnosis. PMC allows you to “free float” subheadings, and this can be a useful option.

- **[ti]** to search for words in titles
  - e.g. obesity[ti]

- **[tw]** Includes all words and numbers in the title, abstract and article body, as well as in table and figure captions and in the article reference section.
  - **Note: This is VERY different from what [tw] will search in PubMed**

- **[ta]** to search for the Medline journal title abbreviation, full journal title, or ISSN number
  - e.g. Am J Bioeth[ta]
  - American Journal of Bioethics[ta]
  - 1526-5161[ta]