

### 3 Hierarchy of evidence and grading of recommendations

Each recommendation has been allocated a grading which directly reflects the hierarchy of evidence upon which it is based. Please note that the hierarchy of evidence and the recommendation gradings relate to the strength of the literature not to clinical importance.

The gradings are as follows:

Hierarchy of evidence		Grading of Recommendations	
Level	Type of evidence	Level	Type of evidence
1a	Evidence from systematic reviews or meta analysis of randomised controlled trials	A	Based on hierarchy I evidence
1b	Evidence from at least one randomised controlled trial	B	Based on hierarchy II evidence or extrapolated from hierarchy I evidence
IIa	Evidence from at least one controlled study without randomisation		
IIb	Evidence from at least one other type of quasi experimental study		
III	Evidence from non experimental descriptive studies, such as comparative studies, correlation studies and case control studies	C	Based on hierarchy III evidence or extrapolated from hierarchy I or II evidence
IV	Evidence from expert committee reports or opinions and/or clinical experience of respected authorities	D	Directly based on hierarchy IV evidence or extrapolated from hierarchy I, II or III evidence
NICE	Evidence from NICE guidelines or Health Technology Appraisal programme	NICE	Evidence from NICE guidelines or Health Technology Appraisal programme
HSC	Evidence from Health Service Circulars	HSC	Evidence from Health Service Circular



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