

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		
IIa	Evidence from at least one controlled study without randomisation	B	Based on hierarchy II evidence or extrapolated from hierarchy I evidence
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		
NICE	Evidence from NICE guidelines or Health Technology Appraisal programme	D	Directly based on hierarchy IV evidence or extrapolated from hierarchy I, II or III evidence
HSC	Evidence from Health Service Circulars		
		NICE	Evidence from NICE guidelines or Health Technology Appraisal programme
		HSC	Evidence from Health Service Circular



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