



# **Choosing images for sharing evidence: a guide**

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**Project in collaboration with Cochrane Knowledge  
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## Who is this guidance for?

**This checklist and guidance is for anyone who needs to choose images for a dissemination product based on any Cochrane Review and you can use it when you are starting to look for images for your product. The principles here may also be helpful when you select images for other materials such as different types of research, news items, reports, surveys, or printed materials. The checklist and guidance aim to be applicable to materials in different languages and cultural settings and were tested with a diverse group of people.**

This guidance is based on, and consistent with, [Cochrane's Checklist and Guidance For disseminating findings from Cochrane intervention reviews](#) and adheres to [Cochrane's Brand Guidelines](#).

This checklist is not intended to guide the production of infographics, but it may be useful for people choosing images to include in infographics.

### **What is a Cochrane dissemination product?**

Cochrane's Checklist and Guidance for disseminating findings from Cochrane intervention reviews describes what a Cochrane dissemination product is as follows:

“A Cochrane dissemination product is any piece of communication that aims to present the findings of a Cochrane Review to any target audience with the aim of supporting an informed decision.

Cochrane dissemination products should aim to give a reasonably complete, nuanced and unbiased representation of the evidence. They should also be presented in ways that are useful, accessible, desirable, and understandable to their target audience(s).

In Cochrane, examples of dissemination products include review summaries, press releases and social media posts. Target audiences for Cochrane dissemination products could include consumers and the public; health practitioners; policy makers and healthcare managers; researchers and research funders; as well as intermediary audiences such as journalists or guideline development groups”.

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# Choosing images for sharing evidence: one-page checklist

- **Item 1. Choose an image that you have permission to use**
- **Item 2. Choose a sufficiently high-resolution image**
- **Item 3. Involve your target audience and seek their feedback (show the image to someone, or use an image created or selected by a target audience)**
- **Item 4. Depict a diverse range of people (across your products and within products), to ensure wide representation and inclusivity**
- **Item 5. Depict the evidence accurately (population, intervention and/or setting)**
- **Item 6. Avoid images with misleading presentations of intervention effects or images that could appear to recommend a treatment**
- **Item 7. Avoid images that show brand names**
- **Item 8. Choose an image that is realistic and relatable for your target audience**
- **Item 9. Think about the appropriateness and acceptability of the image in different settings and cultures**
- **Item 10. Depict the topic sensitively, especially where the topic or findings may be upsetting, controversial or disappointing, and consider the context in which you are sharing the image**
- **Item 11. Avoid images that stigmatize, reinforce stereotypes or are dehumanizing**
- **Item 12. Avoid images that could trigger unwanted feelings or behaviour**
- **Item 13. Ensure the image is not distorted and the main subject is not obscured by other elements**
- **Item 14. Make sure your images comply with accessibility standards**
- **Item 15. Credit the image source**

## Background

This checklist and guidance aims to help you choose images that will enhance your dissemination product and conform to Cochrane Brand Guidelines. It will also help you address users' accessibility needs, licensing issues and other technical aspects of image selection and use. We recognise that image choice will always be subjective, and responses varied, but we have highlighted some of the pitfalls and opportunities around image selection.

### Why images matter

Images can influence what people know, feel and do and they are an important part of dissemination products. A well-chosen image can serve many useful functions. It can help your target audience to see that your dissemination product is relevant to them and to make an immediate connection with the topic. People want to understand as quickly as possible whether information is of any value to them. If you use good, relatable images you can stimulate interest from your target audience, and they will know quickly if your information is relevant to them.

In products such as blogs and summaries of reviews, well-placed images can also support information in the text, can break up text and can improve understandability. The images we choose have the potential to reinforce the message that Cochrane is a trustworthy source of reliable information to support health decisions, but they can also undermine our credibility and put people off. Careful image selection is important.

### Initial things to consider

Before you think about the checklist items, you will need to make some choices when you select an image for your dissemination product.

If you are unsure about the accuracy of an image, check with a review author or editor. Be aware that approval from editors or authors can take some time.

### What will you show?

Consider choosing an image to depict any of the following and pick more than one for products that need more than one image:

- A member (or members) of your target audience. For example, a person or people, having/doing the intervention, talking with a health professional or doing everyday activities. Try to show a variety of people (for example, different ages, ethnicities, gender) across your product range or within a product if you are using more than one image.
- Intervention equipment, for example a syringe, a treadmill, a mobile phone.
- A setting, for example an outdoor gym or an emergency department.
- A concept, for example making treatment decisions.

### What sort of image(s) could you use?

You can use images from free or paid-for stock image libraries. [Stock photos](#) are existing photos which photographers make available through a stock photo web platform. People can then pay for a licence and obtain permission to use them legally in different ways, while the author retains the copyright of their work.

You can also consider alternatives such as images of art, in any media and style, including paintings, sculpture, textile art, cartoons, making sure you have permission to use them. Those created by people with lived experience of health conditions can be particularly meaningful and impactful choices.

You can find sources of images, including those free to use, in [Appendix 1](#).

### Using images of children and young people

Cochrane does use photographs of children and young people in its dissemination products. There are benefits of using such images. [The Child Rights International Network](#) states:

- Media provide powerful tools to give children the right to express their opinions and to make a difference in decisions that affect them.
- Publicity for children can empower them and affirm their worth as human beings with opinions that are worth hearing.
- Photos and articles can raise awareness of children's needs generally.

However, we need to balance those benefits against the risks, including ethical considerations, such as issues of consent and concerns about showing children in distress. In this guidance, we consider some of these issues in the context of specific examples and present alternative images.

When using images of children, it may be best to use Stock images. This is because Stock libraries have a responsibility to ensure that they have consent from the people in their photos. It is harder to be sure that all websites offering free images do this.

# Choosing images for sharing evidence: full guidance with examples

## Item 1. Choose an image that you have permission to use

You cannot just use any image you find on the internet in your dissemination products. It is your responsibility to determine if, and how, you can use an image. Many images may appear to be free to use. However, the majority of images on the internet are likely to be protected by copyright and if you use an image without permission from all of the copyright owners, you may face legal action or costly fines.

Only use or re-post images if you have checked in the terms of use that you are allowed to use it in the way you intend to, or if you have specific permission to use it through a licence.

### Options for images you could use include:

1. Public domain images (which have no copyright). For example, images for which the copyright has expired.
2. Images that have a Creative Commons licence. There are various types of Creative Commons Licence and the terms and conditions of use vary, so be sure to check. You can find out more here: <https://creativecommons.org/about/ccllicenses/>
3. Stock images. You can purchase a licence to use a particular image. You can check the terms and conditions of use on the provider's website.
4. Images that you have created or that the creator of the original image has given you permission to use.

It is recommended that you use known, trusted sources of images. [Appendix 1](#) lists free sources of images and details of existing, licensed images which Cochrane Groups have permission to use.

Be aware that, even when you have permission to use an image, there may be other requirements you need to respect. For example, you may need to:

- Credit the image, in accordance with the terms of the licence ([see item 15](#)).
- Check that you have permission to modify the image, if you would like to do so (for example by changing it from colour into black and white). Some types of Creative Commons Licence prohibit this type of modification.

For more information, read about the [copyright law in your country](#).

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## Item 2. Choose a sufficiently high-resolution image

- Choose an image with sufficiently high resolution, otherwise it will look fuzzy and poor quality. If you want to use a ‘blurred’ or partly blurred image as a deliberate, artistic choice, you should still choose a good quality image.
- For web use, JPEG is an ideal format for all types of images and PNG format works well for images where there is not much colour.
- For web images, you will need to consider the pixel dimensions. You can find this out in the ‘file information’ of an image. (To do this, right click on the image and select ‘get info’ (on a Mac) or ‘file information’ (on Windows) and look at the dimensions). Pixel dimensions are expressed as two numbers (width by height; for example, 1024 x 768). The higher these numbers, the higher the resolution of an image is.
- The specific dimensions required for a particular image will depend on:
  - The size you want the image to appear. The larger you want the image to appear, the higher the resolution it will need to be.
  - What you are using the image for. For example, images in printed materials need to be of a higher resolution than images used in web materials.
- Avoid making small images larger. Instead, find an image that is the right size or larger than you need, and reduce it to the right size. You can use an image program to do this (see [Appendix 2](#) for guidance on this). Images generally lose quality and look fuzzy when they are enlarged, but you can reduce their size and it will not affect their appearance.
- If you want to crop an image, do that before you resize it.

You can find a list of sources of good quality images in [Appendix 1](#). See [Appendix 2](#) for detailed guidance about image resolution and size for images shared on social media and Cochrane websites.

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## Item 3. Involve your target audience or seek their feedback (show the image to someone, or use an image created or selected by a target audience)

- Decide who your primary target audience is, for example, pregnant mothers, allied health professionals, or researchers. This will guide your choices. For more information see [Cochrane’s Dissemination Checklist](#). Be aware that your product may also be of interest to other audiences. For example, your target audience may be health professionals, but people with the health condition may also be interested, unintended audience.
- Consider using an image created or selected by target audience members, to reflect their lived experience of a health condition.
- Consider getting feedback on your image selections in advance with someone from your target audience or, if that is not possible, from a colleague. You might consider using [Cochrane’s Task Exchange platform](#) as a place to ask for feedback. Here is an example of how you might seek feedback from someone (with thanks to Sarah Rosenbaum, Cochrane Norway, for the guidance).



"We are going to post about a summary of research on [Facebook / Twitter / WeChat], intended for people [with experience of health condition X], and need to get some feedback on an image(s) we are considering using. I'm going to show you the text, and then the image (or a set of images). It's primarily the image I need feedback on, although if you have comments on the text we can talk about that afterwards. Can you: 1) tell me your immediate first impression of the image(s) for this posting, without thinking too much? Just whatever comes into your mind when you see it. 2) Then talk a bit about the image, tell me what you think of it, how you feel about it, does it connect with you or not, and any negative or positive reactions you have to it, things we should consider or be aware of from your perspective."

You can find more guidance from Cochrane Norway on conducting user testing in this detailed user test package: <https://www.cochrane.no/our-user-test-package> You can also find detailed guidance on user testing here: <https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/user-research>

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#### **Item 4. Depict a diverse range of people (across your products and within products) to ensure wide representation and inclusivity**

Depicting a range of people is important in ensuring everyone is represented, being inclusive, ensuring relevance and relatability, and potentially challenging stereotypes. This is also important in terms of reducing stigma and discrimination.

- If you use more than one image in a dissemination product or an image with more than one person, consider showing variation within the relevant population. This might include people of different ages, genders, ethnicities and body types.
- Consider also using images of people with visible disabilities even when illustrating topics that are not about that specific disability, such as showing someone with a prosthetic limb in a picture of a group therapy session or smoking cessation interventions. Be aware that choosing an image of one person with a visible difference or disability to accompany content where that is not relevant could mislead your audience into expecting content about that type difference or disability. There is less chance of this with an image of a group of people, without a focus on an individual.
- Consider whether you have shown a range of people across your products over time, relevant to your target audiences.
- You may also consider making multiple versions of your dissemination product to show the variations in the relevant populations. For example, across a series of blogs, blogshots or news items, depict a range of people, whilst ensuring that they are from the right population for the reviews they accompany.

### Example: Cochrane Reviews on exercise



This image shows people of different genders, ages and ethnicities. It could be a good choice for a dissemination product using only one image, though it is not essential to show a mixed group every time and other considerations, such as the review’s population, the setting or your target audience, may lead to other choices.



“Man exercising in park”,  
 Copyright: [World Obesity Federation](#)

These images show people of different ethnicities, ages and body types. Consider using an image that includes somebody with a visible difference where this is not directly relevant to the subject matter. For example, the top right image, which includes a girl with one hand, could be used when sharing a review about encouraging any young people to take part in physical activity. This could help challenge assumptions about disability.

Below is another example that includes somebody with a visible difference (wearing a hearing aid), that could accompany a Cochrane Review that is not specifically about hearing loss.



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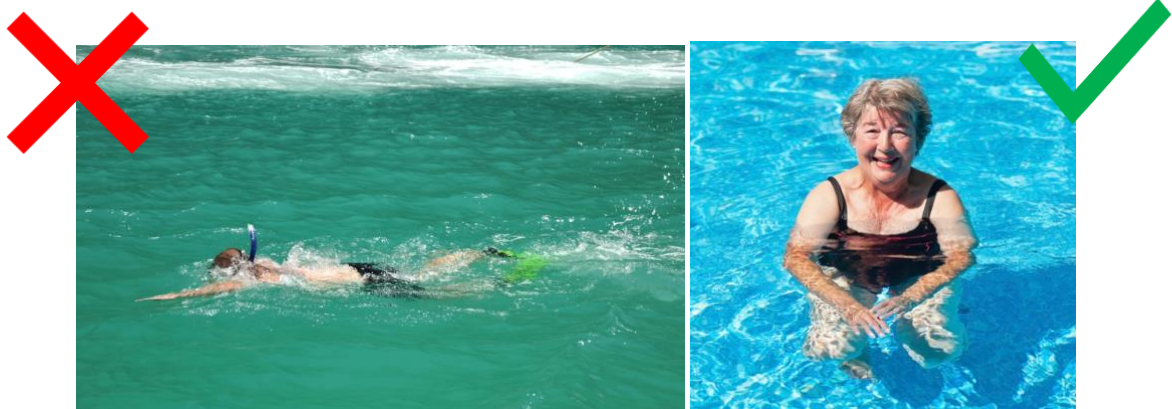
### Item 5. Depict the evidence accurately (population, intervention and/or setting)

- Images should reflect the evidence (population/intervention/setting) the review authors actually found, rather than what they searched for. For example, if review authors looked for studies in children and adults, but only found studies in adults, choose images of adults only. If illustrating an empty review, choose an image that reflects the intended population/intervention/setting. If unsure about accuracy, check with a review author or editor.
- If you use an image of a person or people, you should show the relevant population, for example pregnant women, infants.
- If you show healthcare equipment, make sure it is the correct equipment and likely to be available in the geographical settings of your target audiences.
- Make sure the image shows good practice if you show equipment being used or an intervention being carried out. For example:
  - healthcare professionals wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) should have their hair covered and should not wear jewellery;
  - an image of a woman breastfeeding should show good positioning.
- Consider checking with someone who has relevant expertise, such as health professionals, people with lived experience, or Cochrane Review authors or editorial staff.
- If it is difficult to find appropriate images of the population/intervention/setting, consider alternatives. As well as the examples below, see [Appendix 3](#) for some more detailed, worked examples.

**Be aware that:**

- Stock images which show healthcare equipment, health conditions and interventions may be inaccurate and/or inappropriately labelled.
- There may be details within an image that are problematic and should be avoided. For example, an image of a baby in a cot may show good positioning, with the baby on his or her back, but could also show hazards such as pillows.

**Example: Cochrane Review on aquatic exercise for the treatment of knee and hip osteoarthritis**



It is important that images for this review show someone exercising in water (right) rather than swimming (left), as this accurately represents the intervention (aquatic exercise). The image on the right also shows someone from the relevant population (most participants were female, with an average age of 68 years).

**Example: Healthcare workers and infection prevention and control (IPC) for respiratory infectious diseases**



“PPE Training in Sierra Leone” by USAID U.S. Agency for International Development is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)

“Florida National Guard” by The National Guard is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)

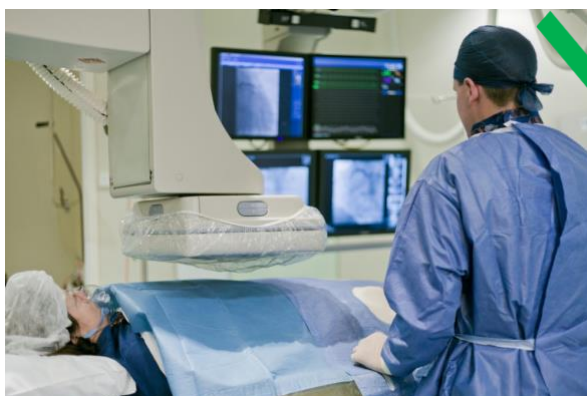
The image on the left was initially chosen to illustrate this review but healthcare professionals who were asked for feedback pointed out that it did not show good practice because people are shown touching their masks and goggles with gloved hands and wearing watches and jewellery. They also noted that the equipment shown is lighter than the equipment that would commonly be used. The picture on the right was approved to replace it. Another consideration here was not to show expensive equipment which would be unavailable in some settings.

### Example: Cochrane Reviews on videolaryngoscopy



Showing a piece of equipment in isolation can be a good option, as long as it is the correct equipment and avoids showing brand names. Be aware that stock images may be labelled inaccurately.

### Example: Cochrane Review on ablation for people with non-paroxysmal atrial fibrillation



This image shows a clinician using a piece of equipment that, whilst not specific to this intervention, is appropriate and realistic. This can be a good alternative where images of specific equipment, techniques, or health conditions are hard to find. It is important that all elements of the image are accurate, including clothing and what is shown on the monitors. Check with an expert if you are unsure.

### Example: Cochrane Reviews on asthma in children



Although the image on the left shows how children may commonly use inhalers, the image on the right is preferable as it demonstrates recommended practice (that is, proper use of an inhaler, using a spacer).

## Example: Cochrane Review on nutritional labelling for healthier food or non-alcoholic drink purchasing and consumption



The image on the right more accurately reflects the review than the image on the left because most of the included studies assessed the impact of nutritional labelling on menus, rather than food packaging labels.

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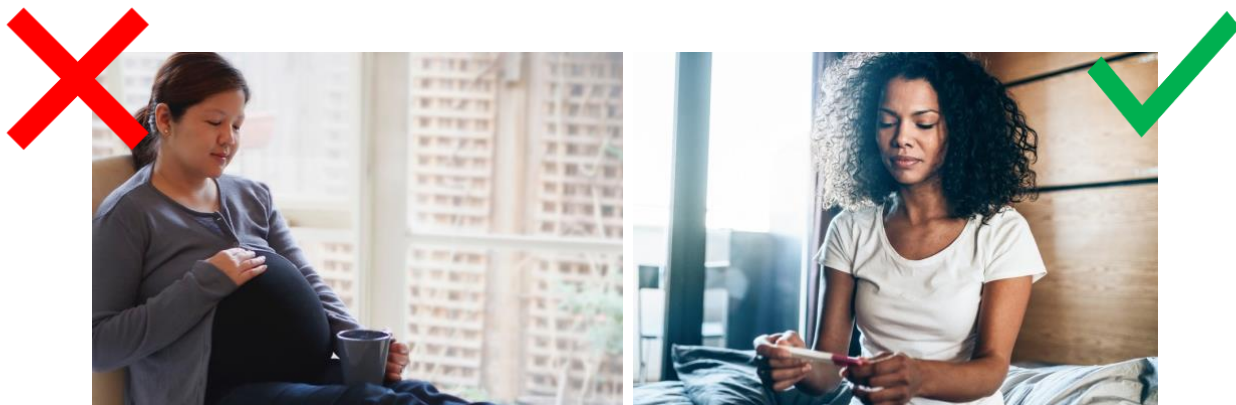
### Item 6. Avoid images with misleading presentations of intervention effects or images that could appear to recommend a treatment

- Images showing treatment effects could exaggerate benefits or harms, or the certainty of the evidence, and potentially conflict with information in the accompanying text. Consider instead showing treatment processes, for example group therapy, being careful that these are neutral and do not suggest treatment effects, or consider showing concepts (such as shared decision-making), or an aspect of living with a health condition.
- Images can be used to support information in the text about evidence on the risks and benefits of treatment. For example, giving a visual representation of a number needed to treat to benefit/harm, accompanied by an explanatory caption, or a Cates Plot from the accompanying Cochrane Review.
- Cochrane Reviews are not supposed to give recommendations for practice, and neither should dissemination products. Be aware that images showing someone happy to be using or buying a treatment could be seen to endorse that treatment.



The image on the top left, because everyone looks happy, could imply that the treatment is effective and safe for all. The image on the top right, because the expressions are neutral, shows the treatment (fortified food) without suggesting anything about its effectiveness or safety. Alternatives include showing images without people, for example showing treatments (Vitamin C pills, bottom left) or items relating to the treatment (exercise equipment, bottom middle). Be sure to show the correct treatment or equipment. The image on the bottom right could be used to suggest uncertainties about treatment.

### Example: Cochrane Reviews on treatments for subfertility, assisted reproduction and related topics



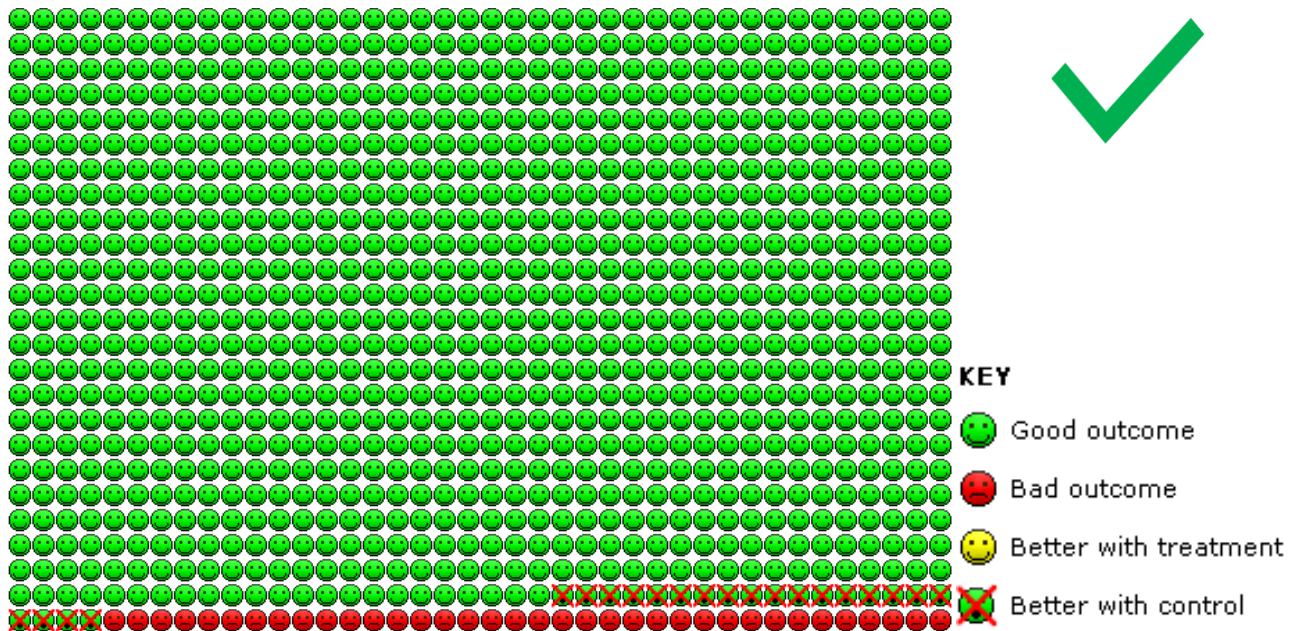
Showing a pregnant woman (left) may be a risky choice for a review on fertility treatments. Even if the treatment was shown to have beneficial effects, such as increasing the chance of having a healthy baby, this effect would not be experienced by all of the women in the studies. Instead, consider showing images of other aspects of a person’s experience of the health condition and treatment. The image on the right may be a good choice as the woman is looking at a pregnancy test with a neutral expression, which does not suggest what the result might be. An alternative would be an image of a consultation with a health professional.

### Example: reviews on acne treatments



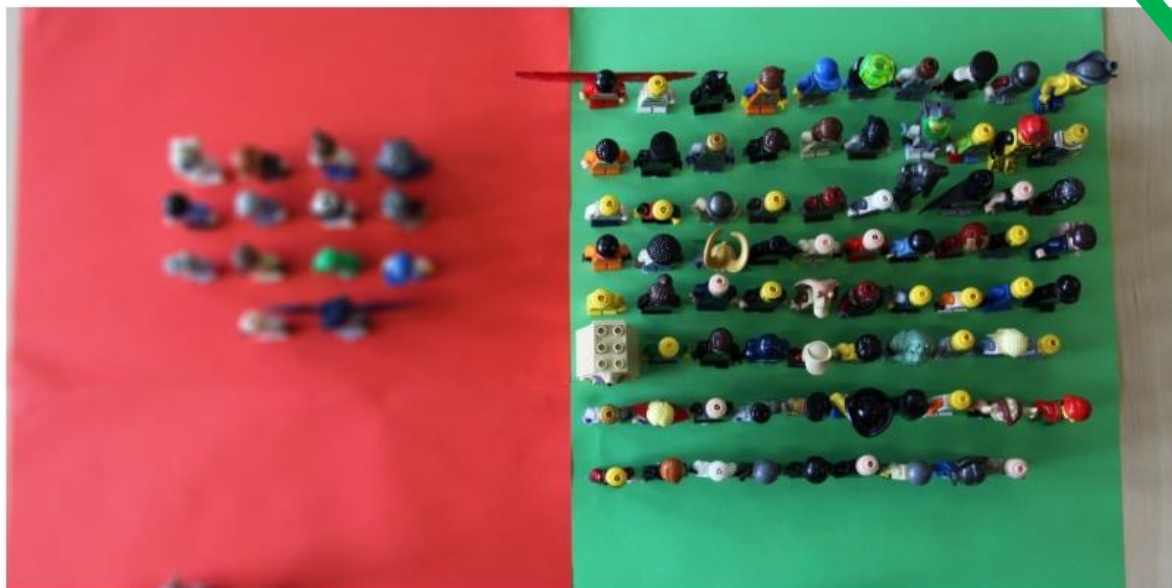
The image on the bottom left shows a woman with acne, whereas the top image, of a woman with clear skin, could suggest treatment effects (possibly unrealistic or exaggerated). An alternative would be to show the treatment, such as a cream (bottom right).

### Examples of images supporting information on the risks and/or benefits of treatments





79 people will not have dementia and will be correctly assessed by the test



The top image is a Cates plot from the Cochrane Review '[Safety of regular formoterol or salmeterol in children with asthma: an overview of Cochrane reviews](#)'

It is accompanied by this explanation: "Cates plot of monotherapy versus placebo trials: In the placebo group 36 people out of 1000 had non-fatal serious adverse events of any cause over 29 weeks, compared to 57 (95% CI 40 to 81) out of 1000 for the LABA monotherapy group. The crossed-out faces show that there were 21 additional children suffering a serious adverse event for every 1000 treated with LABA monotherapy." The image and explanation could be helpful to share in a dissemination product.

The bottom image is one of a series made for a blog about Cochrane evidence on screening tests for dementia. The images used 100 play figures to represent 100 people having screening and to show the sensitivity and specificity of the screening, each accompanied by explanatory text. Note that part of the image is deliberately blurred to focus readers' attention on a particular part of the illustration.

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## Item 7. Avoid images that show brand names

- Avoid depicting a particular brand or trade name of medications or equipment, as this could appear to endorse it or suggest vested interests.
- Ensure that images of alternatives are accurate. For example, if the medication comes as a white tablet, or in a brown inhaler, choose an image showing that but without a brand name displayed.

### Example: Cochrane Reviews on Methylphenidate for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)



“Ritalin 10mg tablets”. by Adam is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)



The image on the top left is to be avoided as it displays a brand name (Ritalin) of a medication (Methylphenidate hydrochloride). The image on the top right, despite not showing a name, is also to be avoided as it does not look like the correct medication. The image on the bottom row is preferable as it avoids showing a name and looks like the correct medication.

### Example: Cochrane Reviews on blood pressure monitoring



This image shows a blood pressure monitor with no brand name.

### Example: Cochrane Reviews on treatments for smoking cessation



This image shows nicotine patches and gum with no brand names.

### Example: Cochrane Reviews on Type 1 diabetes



“Roller Coaster (insulin bottles on glass)”, by [Jennifer Jacobs](#)

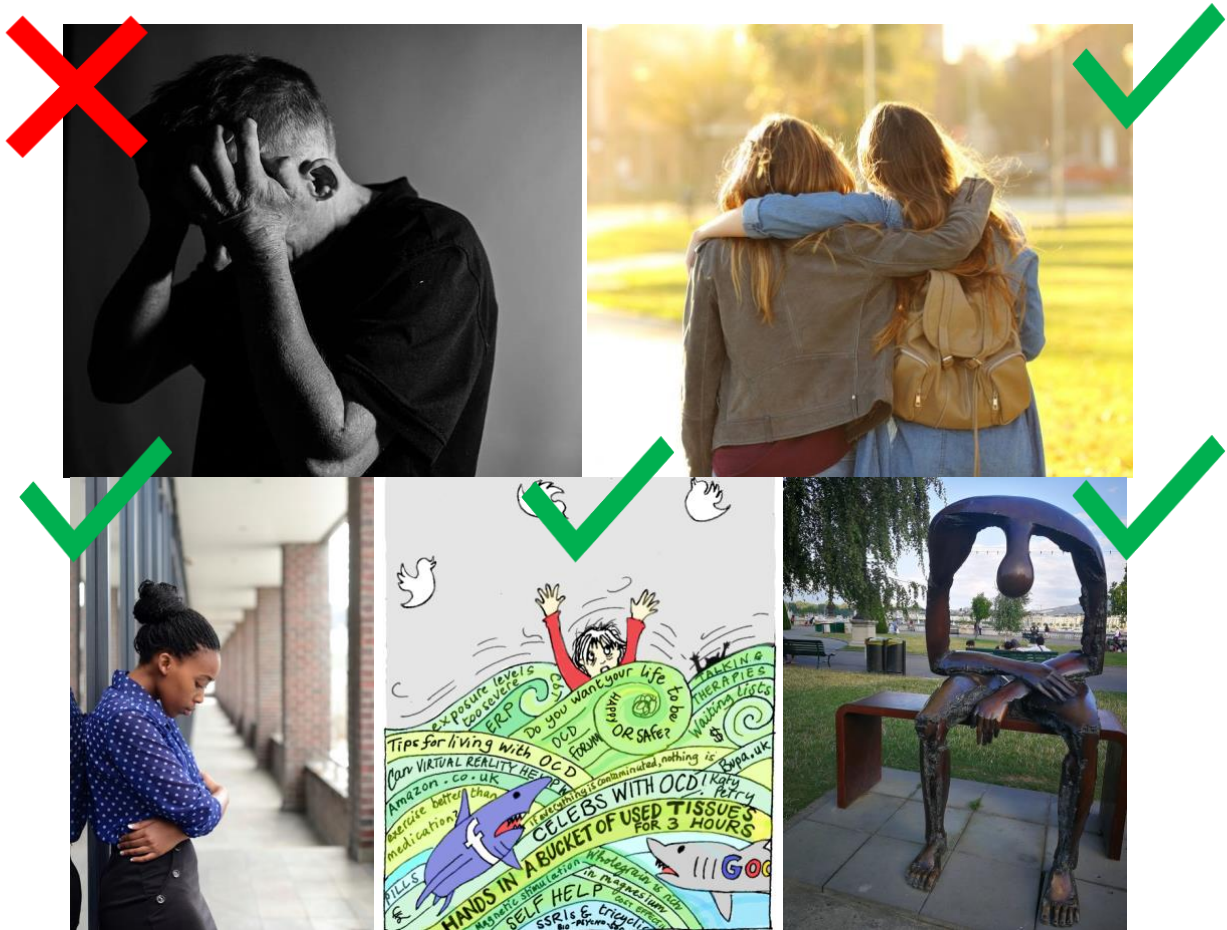
The above is an example of using artwork. It is by Jennifer Jacobs, who has Type 1 diabetes, and shows non-branded diabetes medications and insulin bottles. She says: “living with diabetes is like riding a roller coaster. There are physical highs and lows (blood sugar and insulin), and emotional highs and lows”.

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### Item 8. Choose an image that is realistic and relatable for your target audience

- Make sure the people, activities and settings you show are realistic and relatable. For example, show natural (and often neutral) facial expressions, appropriate for many healthcare situations.
- Consider showing a realistic variety of experience and activity for people living with a health condition, including positive, neutral and negative aspects, and doing everyday things.
- Consider using a real photo or artwork as an alternative to a stock image, which can feel posed and unrealistic. You can find some sources in [Appendix 1](#).

**Example: Cochrane Reviews on common mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety**



“Sea of Google” by Karen Morley

“Albert György. Mélancolie” by art\_inthecity is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/)

There are many considerations when selecting images to share with evidence on mental health problems. Those who work in suicide and self-harm research are acutely aware of the risks associated with certain images acting as triggers for people. **Do not use images which could indicate a means (methods or location) of suicide or self-harm in any circumstance.**

It is important to use images that represent the variety of people’s experience of mental health problems, not a corporate or clichéd version, and to avoid contributing to mental health stigma. The image on the top left is an example of a type of image sometimes called ‘head-clutcher’ images, commonly used to illustrate mental health problems by depicting someone holding their head in their hands. Although some people may find these relatable, this type of image has been [criticised as perpetuating a stereotype of what mental distress looks like](#). The other images may be preferable.

Top right shows two people engaged in everyday activity, a contrast to the more commonly used images of a person isolated. It could suggest support and comfort; a positive image.

Bottom left shows someone in a natural, subdued pose. This challenges a stereotype of mental distress being clearly visible.

Images of art, including those created by people with lived experience of health conditions, can be highly impactful and relatable choices. In the bottom row, the middle image is an illustration done by someone in the UK about their own experience of living with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and seeking information about it, and on the right the sculpture ‘Mélancolie’ by Albert György.

There are [guidelines about responsible reporting in the area of suicide prevention and mental ill-health](#) that we can draw on to try to ensure that our images and descriptions do not trigger people, and instil a sense of hope about recovery ([see item 12](#)).

### Example: clinical encounters



[“Supriya Dae and her son visit paramedic, Shanta Das, for a check-up on his growth”](#) by [\(USAID\) U.S. Agency for International Development](#) is licensed under [\(CC BY-NC 2.0\)](#)

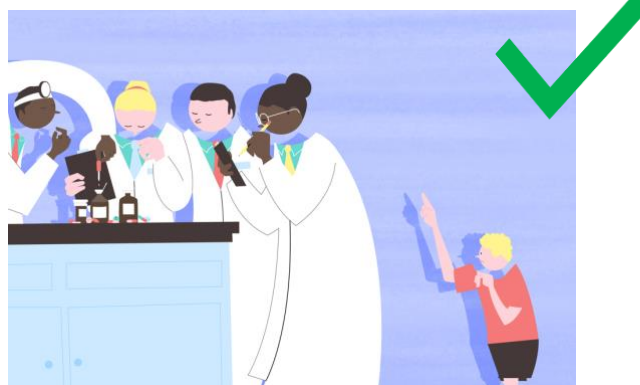
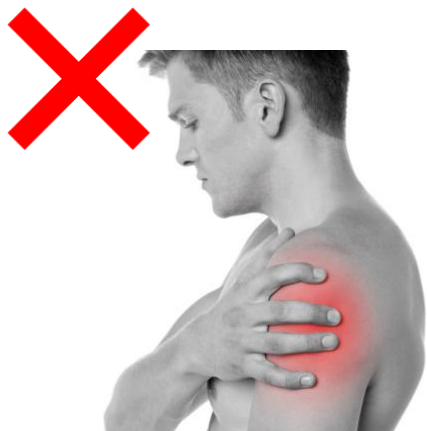
Many stock images of clinical encounters show people who look delighted (image on the left) or distressed. These may strike the wrong emotional tone, especially when accompanying a review which may feel disappointing, for example, where evidence of treatment effectiveness is lacking. Neutral expressions are a safer choice, more realistic and relatable (image on the right). You may also want to consider who is the focus of the image. Those that show a health professional and a patient in an equal dialogue, or focus on the patient, may be more appealing to a target audience of consumers than an image which focuses on the health professional.

### Example: Cochrane Review on yoga for physical rehabilitation after stroke



Although, in both images, the people shown are the right demographic (people in their 60s) and carrying out the right intervention (yoga) for the review, the image on the left shows an unrealistic level of physical functioning. The image on the right may be more realistic and relatable for people rehabilitating after stroke.

### Example: Cochrane Reviews about pain



Migraine Action Art Collection: Image 174, Unnamed artist, 'Unnamed Image'. (2000). Available at <http://www.migraineart.org.uk/artwork/1168/>

"Doctors contemplating medicines whilst child hovers behind" by Gus Scott, Copyright: University of Bath

It can be a difficult balance to find images about being in pain that feel realistic and relatable, but not too uncomfortable or distressing to view.

The top images are clearly of models and look staged and unrealistic. The middle left image, showing a girl in a subdued pose, looks authentic. Another option is to show a relevant pain treatment (middle right image, showing treatment with a TENS device). Bottom left is by someone who has migraines, illustrating their pain experience through art. It could be an impactful and relatable choice. Bottom right is a piece of art commissioned to accompany a campaign highlighting the lack of research about treating children with chronic pain.

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### Item 9. Think about the appropriateness and acceptability of the image in different settings and cultures

- Consider whether an image is going to be appropriate in the settings for which your dissemination product is intended. Bear in mind, for example, geographical differences in resource availability but also factors like the clothing of the people shown, the appearance of streets and buildings, and the weather.
- If you are trying to illustrate something from a culture that is not your own, or with which you are not familiar, then you should consult someone with suitable knowledge or use an alternative. This may concern ethnicity, skin colour, gender roles, hierarchy, moral ideas and common behaviour, gestures, religious practices and places, food, meaning associated with colours or symbols, and design preferences. There may be cultural sensitivities around an image. For example, gestures (such as a thumbs-up) and common behaviours that are acceptable in some cultures may be offensive or inappropriate in others. If you are targeting people in different cultural settings through different channels, consider selecting different images for different settings. Sometimes this may work better to ensure your audiences can relate, than selecting an image that may be so neutral that it is not relatable to either of your audiences.
- Major external events could make an image inappropriate. For example, an image showing people around a campfire to illustrate a review about travellers’ health could be seen as inappropriate if there were currently ongoing bushfires.

#### Example: clinical encounters



“NEPAL” by (USAID) U.S. Agency for International Development is licensed under [CC BY-NC 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/)

An image showing people touching (top) may be unacceptable in some cultures. Consider images (bottom row) that avoid showing physical touch, where touch is not part of the intervention.

### Example: health professionals talking



The image on the left, intended to represent two health professionals, is best avoided as there is a risk of cultural insensitivity surrounding a woman in a hijab appearing to be alone with a man. The image on the right avoids this risk.

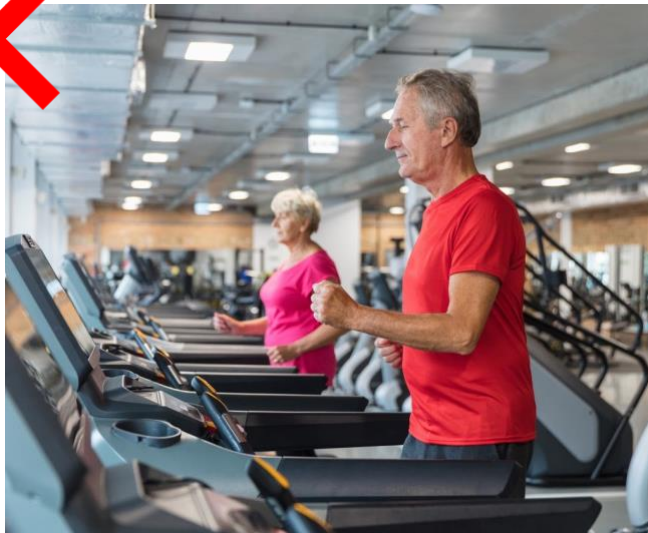
### Example: inviting responses to a questionnaire in New Zealand



Symbols can be used to signify the relevance of a dissemination product to the target audience, but there is a risk of causing offence with an inappropriate choice. In this image a fern leaf, which is a symbol of New Zealand's national identity, could indicate that this dissemination product is intended for a New Zealand audience. Using another symbol associated with New Zealand, the Tiki, could cause offence as it is considered to be an object or natural resource which is sacred in Māori culture.



Example: images for sharing during the COVID-19 pandemic



The image on the left was inappropriate to share when gyms were closed in many countries during the COVID-19 pandemic. The image on the right is a suitable alternative.



With restrictions on socialising and physical contact during the COVID-19 pandemic, the image on the left could be an inappropriate choice. The image on the right shows a gesture adopted by some during the pandemic and might be appropriate to share, where the gesture was both permissible and being used.

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## Item 10. Depict the topic sensitively, especially where the topic or findings may be upsetting, controversial or disappointing, and consider the context in which you are sharing the image

### At a minimum:

- Think about whether the review's topic or the findings are likely to be upsetting, controversial, or disappointing to people, and particularly your target audience and others likely to be interested in your product. Where this is the case, think critically about the images you use and make sure you are sensitive to these issues, and check your choice with at least one other person. This could be a colleague, for example from Cochrane's Knowledge Translation Team.

### Ideally, also:

- Explore this through gathering feedback from your target audience, for example health professionals, but also people with lived experience. Their reactions will probably vary, but their opinions are likely to be more relevant than your own. Remember that it can be difficult to predict people's reactions if you are not familiar with the topic area. If you have worked professionally with a topic for several years, you may also have become 'immune' to its emotional impact.

### Be aware that:

- Occasionally you may choose to include an image that could be upsetting. For example, an image provided by a consumer to accompany their story. In this case, consider alerting readers to this in the accompanying text. Some people prefer to avoid images which only show people from behind, or in silhouette, as this may suggest shame or the need for anonymity. However, others see these images as thoughtful and impactful. This is another example of where it may be useful to seek feedback from your target audience.
- There are ethical considerations around using photos of children and young people, and other groups who may be unable to give fully informed consent to their photographs being used. You may want to consider alternatives.
- The context of your image could come across as insensitive. For example, avoid adding Christmas-related illustrations to Cochrane dissemination products when sharing evidence on serious health conditions.

## Example: Cochrane Review on care prior to and during subsequent pregnancies following stillbirth for improving outcomes



The image of baby shoes (left) could be insensitive to people's feelings of loss after a stillbirth. The emotional tone of the image on the right feels more appropriate and sensitive. The image focuses on a pregnant woman, rather than a baby, and her posture could suggest concern about her current, and prior, pregnancies.

### Pregnancy after stillbirth: experience and evidence gaps

BY SUSANNAH HOPKINS LEISHER AND ALEENA WOJCIESZEK AUGUST 9, 2019 // 52 COMMENTS



TWEET



SHARE

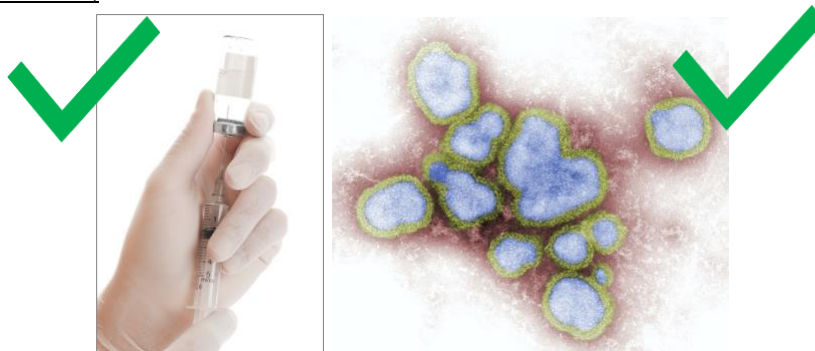
*In this blog, [Susannah Hopkins Leisher](#) shares her experience of the trauma of stillbirth and impact on subsequent pregnancies and, with researcher [Aleena Wojcieszek](#), looks at gaps in the evidence on how to care for such women and their families. Please be aware that some may find the content of this blog upsetting. [This blog is part of a series called 'Maternity Matters'; you can read the rest here.](#)*

The introduction to [this blog on pregnancy after stillbirth](#) alerts readers to content that could be upsetting, as it includes images of the blog author's stillborn baby, which she wanted to share. It was an important part of honouring her story to include those images and potentially challenges taboos around death. (See also [item 12](#) on triggers).

## Example: images about childhood vaccination



“Hep B, Left Arm 2” by Eric Peacock is licensed under [\(CC BY-NC-SA 2.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/)



Childhood vaccination is a topic that is controversial for some and may also be something parents are anxious about. The image on the top left, which shows a child in distress after vaccination, could be off-putting and prevent some members of the target audience (parents or carers) from reading the accompanying text about the Cochrane evidence. There are also [concerns about the ethics of showing images of distressed children, as well as children in general](#). The images top middle and top right help people make a link with the topic but avoid implying that it is necessarily a distressing experience. We feel the smiling faces of the mother and health professional (top right) reflect natural behaviour in this context, rather than seeming to endorse a treatment.

There are alternatives to showing children, such as the bottom left image of a vaccine being drawn up into a syringe. It is important to check that there is no brand name and details shown are correct, such as the vaccine name and type of needle used. The bottom right image shows the Influenza A virus; it would be important to check with members of your target audience whether they would connect with this and what they think about it (and alternatives). Alternatives include images showing a clinic or a discussion between a parent and health professional, or artwork.

**Example: School-based education programmes for the prevention of child sexual abuse**



There are ethical considerations around the use of images of children, including whether they have given informed consent and would be happy for their photo to be used in any context. Showing children or young people’s faces (top and middle left) is best avoided in this example, where there are plenty of good alternatives to help people link the image with the subject matter. The image showing a class of children from behind (top right) would be a safer choice. Another consideration about the top left image is that the studies in the Cochrane Review were conducted in North America, Europe, and Asia, so this image does not reflect the population actually studied.

The middle left image is also problematic because, as well as showing the girl’s face, in the context of this review the girl and teacher could be seen to be discussing a disclosure of sexual abuse, but the setting does not show best practice because another child is present. The middle right image of crayons suggests a link with children and possibly with school. They are the type often associated with young children, an age group included in this review. The school bus (bottom) is another way to indicate the topic of school; images of a school building or empty classroom would be alternatives.

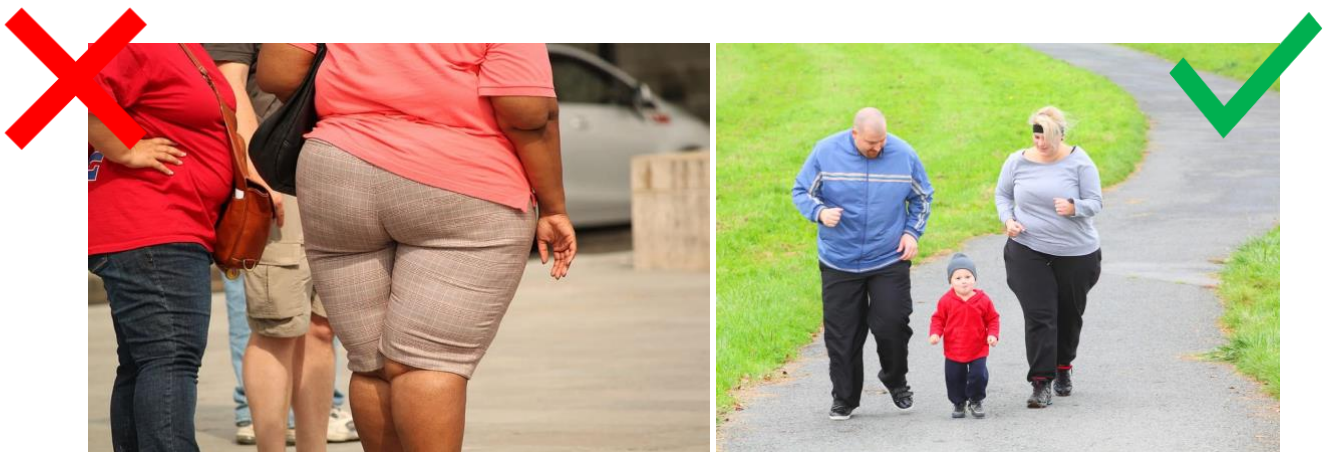
**[Return to the one-page overview.](#)**

## Item 11. Avoid images that stigmatize, reinforce stereotypes or are dehumanizing

There are certain topics where there is particular risk of choosing images that could stigmatize, reinforce stereotypes, or dehumanize, such as mental health problems and obesity or overweight. These can relate to body type, behaviour, and social situations depicted. For example, an image of an overweight person, alone, holding junk food, and possibly only showing their torso. These sorts of images can unhelpfully reinforce stereotypes, fuel stigma and can be disrespectful and off-putting to our target audiences. It is also important to consider whether we are reinforcing or challenging other types of stereotypes, such as gender, socio-economic, or ethnic stereotypes.

- Avoid images that stigmatize, reinforce stereotypes or are dehumanizing, such as images that crop out people's heads without a clear reason for this. Exceptions would be, for example, when you want to show details of an intervention, equipment or health condition.
- Consider images that challenge stereotypes and offer positive alternatives. For example, consider showing both men and women, of different ethnicities, as nurses or surgeons, if that reflects the reality of your geographical location. [Be aware that minority ethnic groups are often depicted negatively in mass media](#), making it even more important that we challenge such depictions and offer positive alternatives.
- Consider showing a range of experience for people with the relevant health conditions, including positive and negative aspects, and 'normal' activity as well as activity related to the condition or treatment.

### Example: Cochrane Reviews on overweight or obesity



The image on the left focuses on people's torsos. This [commonly used type of image to accompany information on obesity has been criticised as dehumanizing](#). The image on the right is much more respectful and positive, showing a family engaged in a healthy, everyday activity.

## Example: Cochrane Reviews on palliative care



Whilst liked by some as showing care and compassion for an older person, images just showing ‘wrinkly hands’ (top), have received [criticism for being an unimaginative stereotype of older people](#) (in a social media campaign called #NoMoreWrinklyHands). Showing enjoyment may not be an obvious choice for a topic such as this but can work well, as in the image of the elderly man reaching for the dog (bottom left). The image on the bottom right shows a volunteer sitting with someone at the end of their life in Kerala, India, and is a realistic alternative to a stock image, appropriate to share in some settings.

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## Item 12. Avoid images that could trigger unwanted feelings or behaviour

Triggers may produce uncomfortable feelings in people or prompt behaviours that they wish to avoid. These will be most obvious for (but not limited to) topics such as smoking cessation, alcohol and drug use, self-harm and a range of mental health disorders. Images also have the potential to glamorize harmful behaviours such as smoking and drinking alcohol.

- Do not use images which could indicate a means (methods or location) of suicide or self-harm in any circumstance.
- Avoid using images that show activities or associated equipment or settings that could trigger unwanted feelings or behaviour.
- Avoid images that could be seen to glamorize harmful behaviours. For example, a highly attractive person smoking or a group of people drinking alcohol and having fun.
- If in doubt, consider using an alternative such as an abstract image.

- Consider using a trigger warning (some introductory text) to alert readers that content may produce uncomfortable feelings or prompt unwanted behaviours. For example, “this blog may contain content that could be upsetting”.

**However, be aware that:**

- Any type of image has the potential to evoke unwanted responses because of features of the image such as colour or shape. For example, it has been suggested [the colour red should not be used alongside information about self-harm](#).
- Images used in other contexts could be triggering. For example, a location intended to illustrate outdoor exercise could be triggering if it could be seen to relate to a potential means of suicide or self-harm.

**Example: Cochrane Reviews on suicide or self-harm**



**We should not use images which indicate a means (methods or location) of suicide or self-harm in any circumstance.** Alternatives include showing someone in a neutral or safe space (left), perhaps being comforted or supported (right).

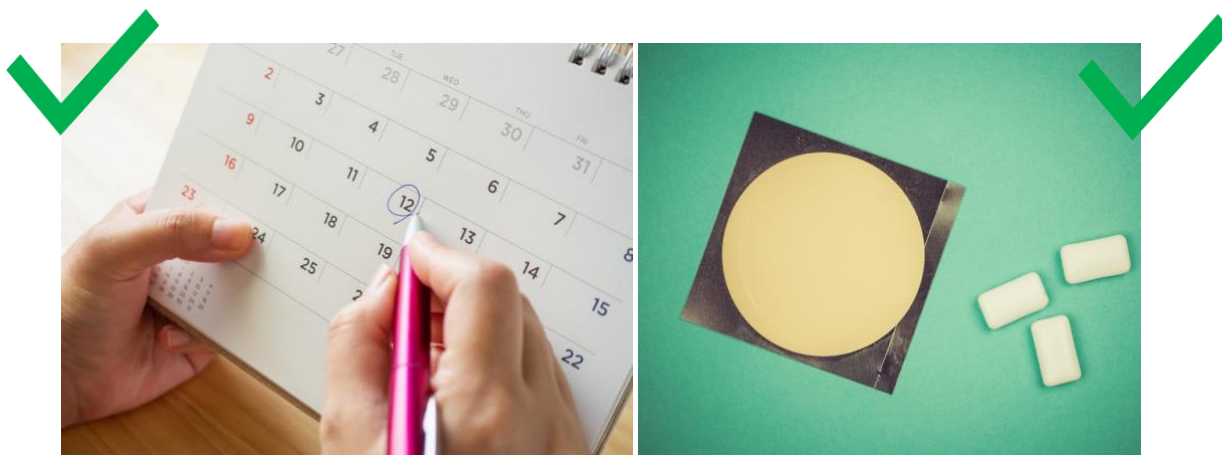
**Example: Cochrane Reviews on smoking cessation**

It is very common for dissemination products about smoking cessation to include images of tobacco-related products, but this can be triggering for people who smoke and for former smokers, and is best avoided.



For example, these types of images are commonly used to accompany information on quitting smoking, but could be [triggering to some people who smoke and for former smokers](#).

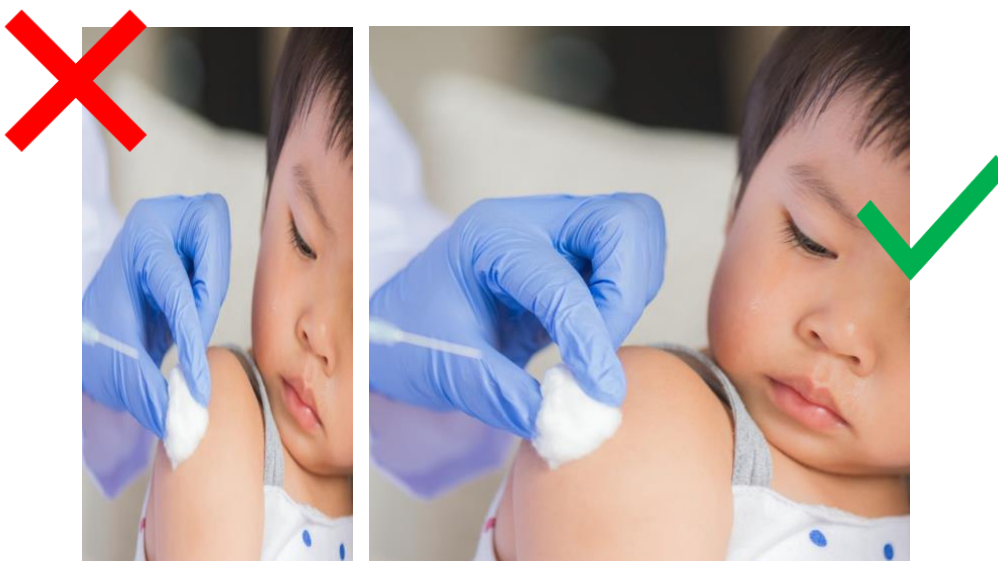




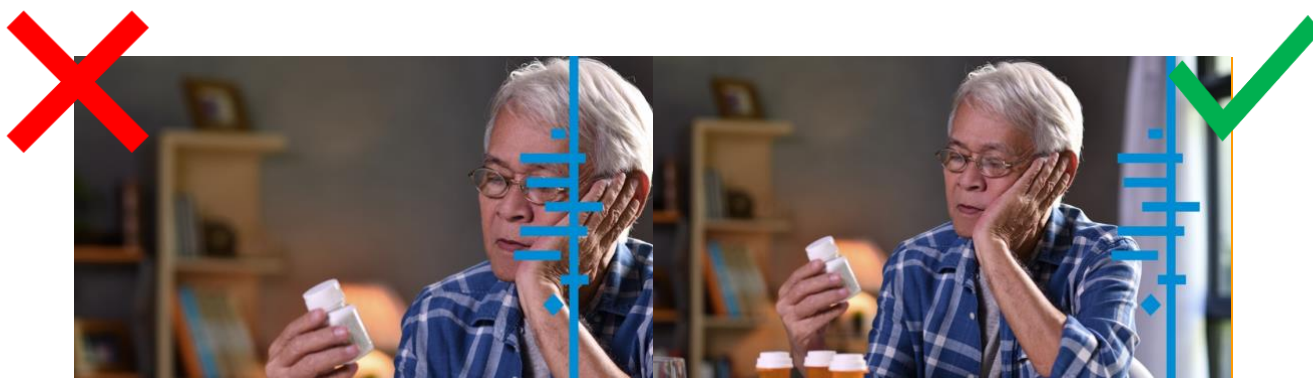
Quitting smoking can be illustrated in other ways. For example, an image that suggests a ‘quit date’ (left) or, where relevant, that shows an intervention such as nicotine patches or gum (right).

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**Item 13. Ensure the image is not distorted and the main subject is not obscured by other elements**



The image on the right is preferable to the image on the left as it is in the correct dimensions and the subject is not distorted.



The examples on the right and in the middle are preferable to those on the left as the main subject of the image is not obscured by the forest plot.

It may sometimes be helpful to modify images, for example by cropping them, or flipping the image horizontally, if you have permission to do so. This can work with an image like the top left image. If you flip it horizontally the man will be on the left-hand side, allowing more unobstructed image space on the right for the forest plot (middle image). To flip an image: click on the image, go to format and then select the 'flip horizontal' option from the rotate button drop down.

See [Appendix 2](#) for guidance about image size and dimensions on Cochrane websites.

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## Item 14. Make sure your images comply with accessibility standards

- Avoid using images of written text or with embedded text, as this will not be accessible for people with impaired vision who are using screen readers. It is also problematic when translating materials. The following exceptions are permitted:
  - Text that is part of a logo or brand name.
  - Text that is part of a complex image, such as a graph or diagram.
  - Text that is purely decorative (where words can be reordered or substituted without changing the meaning of the image).
- When inserting an image into a web page, resource, social media post or document, always provide a text alternative, commonly referred to as 'alt text'. This is important because information cannot be interpreted by web or assistive technologies unless it is available as text. The alt text should:
  - Describe the information or function provided by the image.
  - Be short and to the point (typically no more than a few words).
  - Not use the words 'image of', 'picture of' or 'graphic of', as this is unnecessary.

What constitutes appropriate alt text will vary from image to image. **Consider the following:**

- **What are you trying to achieve with the image?** You need to describe the information that the image provides, not the image itself. For example, an image of the Twitter logo would usually have the alt 'Twitter' rather than 'Blue bird'.
- **Does the image convey new information?** Images that are purely decorative or provide content that is already available as text elsewhere on the page or post should be given null alt text (`alt=""`) wherever possible, so assistive technologies know they can ignore them. Do this by typing "" within the 'Image Description' box (sometimes also called the alt text field). Be sure not to include a space in between the quotation marks.
- **Is the image a hyperlink?** The alt text should reflect where the link is going to, not how the image looks. For example, an image of a woman speaking on the phone that links to a 'Contact us' page would have the alt 'Contact us' rather than 'Woman speaking on phone'.
- **Complex images, such as diagrams or charts, cannot be explained using alt text alone.** Instead, use the alt text to give a brief description of the image ('Diagram of a hip joint') then provide a detailed explanation either on the same page as the image or on a separate, linked page.
- **If you cannot avoid images which contain text, it is best to have the exact same text in the alt text description.** You should also make sure that there is sufficient contrast between the colour of the text, and the colour of the background. For example, avoid yellow text on a light background.

See the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) alt decision tree if you need help on deciding what type of alt text to use: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/tutorials/images/decision-tree/>

More detailed guidance and examples about alt text can be found here: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/tutorials/images/>

See [Appendix 4](#) for detailed guidance on how to add alt text for images used on:

- Cochrane websites.
- Word documents.
- Social media.
- Buffer (a social media scheduling platform).

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## Item 15. Credit the image source

Any time you use an image, you need to have permission to do so ([see item 1](#)). In addition, for some (but not all images) you need to provide attribution to the photographer or credit the image source. Typically, the 'credit line' appears alongside the photo, either positioned along one edge or directly underneath, for example in the caption.

Photographers and copyright holders often require specific wording or offer suggested phrasing to accompany their images and state this on their website. Follow this where provided. Some examples include:

- Photo by Samuel Jones, modified with permission.
- Drawings provided by A. Illustrator.
- Image courtesy of the Library of Toronto.
- © 2017 House of Artwork.
- "Image name" by Samuel Jones is licensed under CC-BY 2.0.

For images with a Creative Commons Licence, include:

- The **title** of the image.
- The **author**'s name (with a hyperlink to their profile page, if available).
- The **source** (with a hyperlink to the original image).
- The **licence** (with a hyperlink to the licence deed).

## Example: crediting an image which has a Creative Commons Licence



**“Creative Commons 10th Birthday Celebration San Francisco”**  
**by tvol is licensed under CC BY 2.0**

**Title** = "Creative Commons 10th Birthday Celebration San Francisco"

**Author** = "[tvol](#)" – linked to the author’s profile page

**Source** = "[Creative Commons 10th Birthday Celebration San Francisco](#) links to the original Flickr page

**Licence** = "[CC BY 2.0](#)"– links to the licence deed.

The above is a good format to follow in cases where you have to give credit, but the copyright holder has not given suggested phrasing.

Cochrane Groups do not have to provide attribution to the photographers for images you can find in Cochrane’s shared Dropbox folder. You can find details on accessing this folder in [Appendix 1](#), where you can also find a list of websites which offer free, high-resolution images. Often these do not require you to provide an attribution when using the image, although some may, so it is important to check.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Useful sources of images

### **For stock and Cochrane Community images:**

Cochrane has a shared 'Photos' Dropbox folder. You can use any of the images for your Cochrane websites, newsletters, reports, printed materials, and social media posts. Pictures in this folder are updated weekly, so it is recommended that you bookmark this Dropbox folder. Pictures are sorted into sub-folders and can also be searched for by keyword. To access this folder, please email Muriah Umoquit, Communications and Analytics Officer, [mumoquit@cochrane.org](mailto:mumoquit@cochrane.org). You do not have to provide attribution to the photographers for photos from this folder.

### **Websites offering free images:**

There are a number of websites where you can download free, high-resolution images. Often these do not require you to provide an attribution when using the image, although some may, so it is important to check.

### **For general health, lifestyle and textures:**

- Unsplash: <https://unsplash.com/>
- Pexels: <https://www.pexels.com/>
- Pixabay: <https://pixabay.com/>
- StockSnap: <https://stocksnap.io/>

### **For obesity related images:**

The World Obesity Federation has a free, searchable image bank:  
<https://www.worldobesity.org/resources/image-bank/>

### **For images of relevance to low and middle-income countries (LMIC):**

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has a library of images:  
[https://www.flickr.com/photos/usaid\\_images/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/usaid_images/). Please adhere to the copyright conditions and terms of use listed alongside each photo.

### **For public health related images:**

The World Health Organization (WHO) Photos Search engine contains photographs covering the WHO's work, health topics, diseases and wider issues related to public health since 1948:  
<https://whophotosearch.lightrocketmedia.com/>. Please adhere to the copyright conditions and terms of use here: <https://whophotosearch.lightrocketmedia.com/termsfuse>

### **For vaccination images:**

The American Academy of Pediatrics and *SELF* Magazine have partnered to offer original images to the public that are free and accurately and responsibly portray vaccination:  
<https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/Immunizations-Image-Gallery.aspx>  
Please use the following credit line: Heather Hazzan, *SELF* Magazine.

### **For images related to the COVID-19 response:**

The United States National Guard has a free bank of images related to COVID-19:  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/thenationalguard/albums/72157713483827538>. Please adhere to the copyright conditions and terms of use listed alongside each photo.

***For art, including art created by people with lived experience of particular conditions:***

It is worth searching for images that are created by people about their health experiences. Be sure to check the permissions and terms of use.

- **The Metropolitan Museum of Art** in New York, United States, has made over 400,000 images of art available on open access. You can search here, and filter by images that are 'open access': <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection>.
- **The Migraine Art Collection** is a gallery of art created by people with migraines, illustrating their experiences of migraine: <http://www.migraineart.org.uk/>. Please follow the permissions and terms of use here: <http://www.migraineart.org.uk/using-the-images/>.

**Using an Advanced Google Search to find images that are free to use**

You can also find free images using an Advanced search on Google Images. To do so, search for an image on Google Images and then go to 'Settings' > 'Advanced search'. Scroll to the dropdown box called 'usage rights' and select 'Creative Commons licences' and then click on 'advanced search'. Beware that although the images are free to use, you still need to credit them appropriately and this will vary depending on the type of licence. [Guidance on crediting images with different types of Creative Commons licences](#).

**If you cannot find an image that works for you**

If you cannot find an image that works for you (for example topic specific, location specific), you may pick stock images from [www.istock.com](http://www.istock.com). Cochrane has a limited budget to purchase stock images as part of support to groups each month. Please email [mumoquit@cochrane.org](mailto:mumoquit@cochrane.org). Send the name of the image, URL link, and your group name and Muriah will download the image at no cost to your group. If you cannot find any appropriate pictures in iStock, please send a description on the dissemination product and URL of the Cochrane Review to Muriah and she will suggest several options.

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## Appendix 2: Guidance about image resolution and size

### How to choose the right size image for sharing on social media

As a general rule, images shared on social media should have a minimum width of 1000 pixels, but the specific dimensions vary.

You can find detailed guidance about the specific dimensions for images shared on each platform here:

<https://buffer.com/library/ideal-image-sizes-social-media-posts>

### How to choose the right size image for use on Cochrane websites

- ‘Featured images’: 620 x 280. This is the image which appears as the main image on the homepage, such as the main news story. (The Cochrane forest plot is automatically added to the image when you publish).
- Lower news boxes: Images must be between 200 x 200 and 1200 x 1200 pixels.
- Banner images for tops of pages: if you want to put a banner at the top of a page, note that its width depends on the layout of the page, i.e. the number of columns it displays.
  - For a one column page, the width of the banner is 950 pixels.
  - For a two-column layout (i.e. a page that displays a column on the left or on the right side), the width is 750 pixels.
  - For a three-column layout (i.e. a page that displays columns on both the left and on the right side), the width is 535 pixels.

For images uploaded on Cochrane websites, it is better to upload an image which is already in the recommended dimensions, rather than uploading a bigger image and then relying on how the system will crop it to adjust to that size.

For example, if you have a bigger image that you want to use as a ‘featured image’, adjust it first by yourself, by cropping it to 620 x 280, i.e. by taking a portion of it that will fit well with the added forest plot. There are several free online tools you can use to crop an image. For example:

<https://picasize.com/>. Note, that this is cropping the image, rather than resizing it; read about the difference here.

For more information, see the [Cochrane Group Website Guidelines and an admin manual for webmasters](#).

### How to find out what the size of an image is (for example, one that you can see on a web page)

- You can always download the image and check it in your image program. But you can also check it in the internet browser:
  - Right click on the image of interest.
  - Choose “Inspect”.
  - A column for developers opens up, usually on the right of the web page. At the top, choose the icon on the far left - a box with an arrow pointing into it.
  - Then hover over the image of interest - it will be marked blue and a small popup text will tell you the image size. (Tip: take a screen shot for reference).

### How to reduce the risk of your content loading slowly

It is recommended that you compress (reduce) the file size of your image to the size of use, otherwise it can make a website load slowly. This can be off-putting or could even prevent people from accessing your content, particularly in areas with poor internet connection.

Free online tools are available for this, for example: <https://compressimage.toolur.com/>.

### How to resize an image in Photoshop (an example strategy):

- File/ Export / Save for web (legacy).
- Choose JPG for photos (see below about other formats).
- Click “progressive” (uploads progressively, showing the viewer an unsharp version while waiting for the full image to upload).
- Quality 50 (unless the image has text in it that you want to be sharp). 50 is only marginally lesser quality than 60 but considerably smaller in data size.
- Choose your desired image size, either the desired height or desired width (do not enlarge images).

### A note about image formats

JPG is still the recommended format for most types of images. You can use .gif if your image is a lot of flat colour, like a graphic. It is recommended that you test it. If your image is a graph with text, and you are using jpg, you will need to choose a higher quality setting than 50 for the text to be sharp and legible.

Jpgs (and gifs) get progressively worse in quality each time they are resized. Therefore if you are making multiple sizes or croppings, make a new one each time from the original image.

RGB images are preferable for web use, whereas CYMK images are preferable for print products.

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## Appendix 3. Choosing images - worked examples from Cochrane UK

Below are three examples illustrating our thought process when selecting images for dissemination products for three different Cochrane Reviews. The examples illustrate a range of different challenges and considerations.

### Example A

#### **Cochrane Review:**

[Decompressive craniectomy for the treatment of high intracranial pressure in closed traumatic brain injury.](#)

#### **Dissemination product:**

*Evidently Cochrane* blog, "[Traumatic brain injury: is decompressive surgery worth the risks?](#)" and a graphic with the blog's take-home points, to be at the bottom of the blog and separately on social media. The blog discussed the evidence, and whether the benefits outweigh the risks of the surgery.

#### **Audience:**

Patients recovering from traumatic brain injury where the pressure inside the skull is not controlled by medications, and their relatives.

#### **How many images needed?**

Two. A featured image, which would be repeated in a circle on the take-home points slide, and a second image for use within the blog.

#### **Problems and considerations**

- How could we show our target audience that this is relevant to them and without putting them off?
- Showing an accident scene could be distressing, as could showing a critically ill patient – plus it could be difficult to find one of someone with the right wound dressing, for example, and the right surrounding equipment.
- The operation is difficult to illustrate. Images we found were graphic and frightening or were textbook diagrams.
- We wanted to show something indicating decision-making and choices.

## Possible solutions

### Images related to surgery

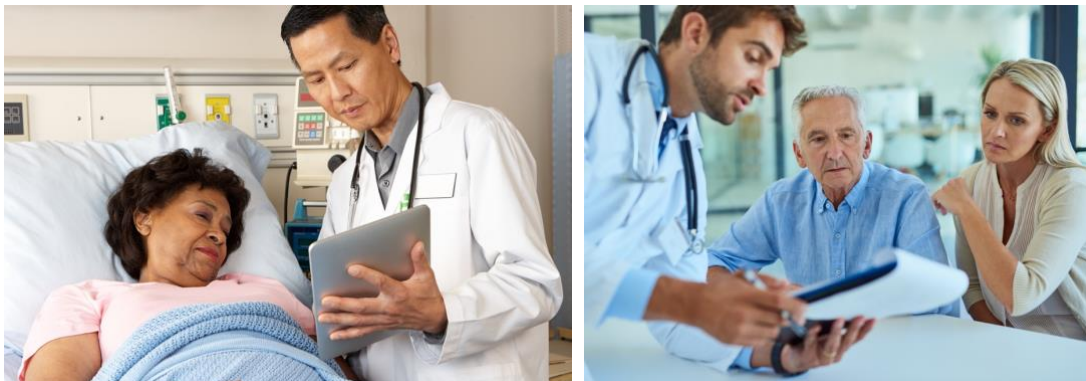


One option was to use an image to show readers that the blog was about surgery, for example an operating theatre, a surgeon, a patient being taken to/returning from theatre or a patient in recovery. Any detail relating to the equipment, procedures, or the patient's injuries would need to be accurate. We could not find a suitable image of a patient.

We opted not to use the images above because:

- An empty operating theatre felt too impersonal (left).
- We had used a similar image of surgeons operating in a recent blog, and wanted to show variety across our products (right).

### An image illustrating a discussion between the patient and/or family and a doctor



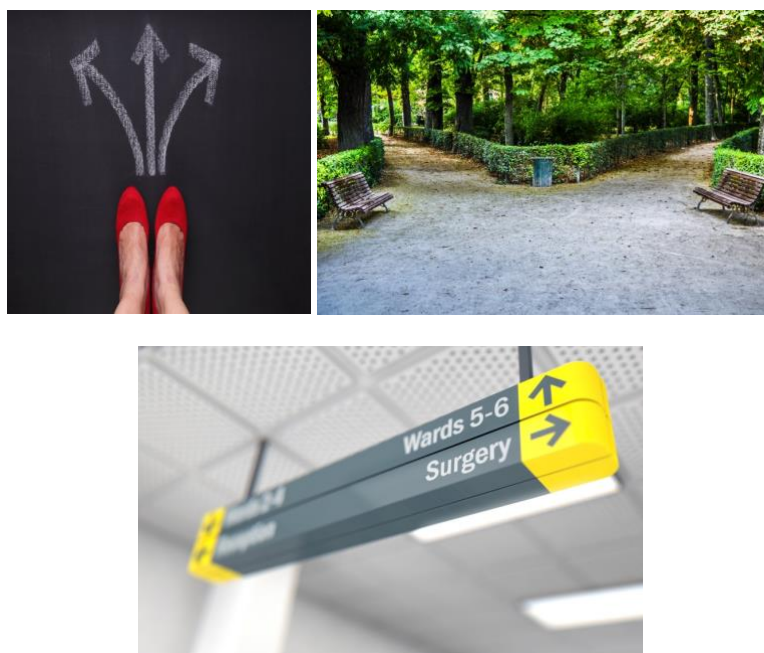
We rejected the image on the left because we checked with the blog author, a neurosurgeon, who said that the woman does not look like she has a traumatic brain injury. The blog author also advised us that this discussion would most likely be conducted with a person's next-of-kin, rather than the patient, because the patient might be too unwell. We chose the image on the right which we felt was an authentic, respectful and relatable choice to show a discussion with relatives.

## Images illustrating the concept of weighing up benefits and harms



Another option was to show a visual representation of the need to weigh up the benefits and harms of surgery. However, not all of these types of image will be neutral. This one suggests the risks outweigh the benefits, so we opted not to use it.

## Images illustrating the concept of choice



The first two images are typical of the images available in stock libraries to illustrate the concept of choice. We rejected the top images because:

- The tone of the image on the left felt inappropriate, with the red shoes seeming frivolous, for use in the context of critical illness.
- While the image on the right felt more respectful than the image on the left, we felt we could find an alternative that helped the reader make a more obvious connection with the topic of surgical treatment choices.

We chose the bottom image which we felt both illustrated choice and signified the context of surgery.

## The final selection



We used the image on the left as our featured (main) image and for the social media advert, and the image on the right in the body of the blog. Using the picture of the hospital sign as the main image should help readers make an immediate link with the blog being about surgery. We balanced the picture of an object against a picture of people, which we think may be more engaging and relatable.

## Example B

**Cochrane Review:** [Negative pressure wound therapy for surgical wounds healing by primary closure](#)

### Dissemination product:

Blogshot (a single slide showing the key messages of the Cochrane Review), for sharing on social media. The blogshot was in Cochrane UK's '*Evidence for Everyday Nursing*' template.

### Audience:

Nurses primarily, as well as patients with surgical wounds healing by primary closure.

### How many images needed?

One

### Problems and considerations

- Showing a surgical wound could be one way of quickly letting our target audience know what this review is about, but it could be difficult to find a realistic-looking wound and/or could be off-putting.
- We also considered using an image of a device used to deliver negative pressure therapy. However, we were unable to find a free, good quality image where the device shown was non-branded. The image would need to fit within the specific dimensions of a blogshot (with the height approximately twice the width). It was difficult to find an image in the suitable dimensions for a blogshot.

## Possible solutions



One option was to show a relevant wound. However, it was difficult to find one that looked realistic. Those we found either showed graphic details or had already healed (left). Additionally, the patients and types of wound included in the review varied. This meant that showing one type (for example from a caesarean, as shown on the left) could risk failing to communicate that the review is also related to other types of wounds (for example, fracture surgery wounds).

Another option was to show wound dressings (right). Although this would signify the general topic of wounds, it would not show the specific intervention (negative wound pressure therapy).

## The final selection



We chose to show a nurse. Although this would not signify the specific health problem or intervention, it would quickly allow our primary target audience (nurses) to recognise that the product may be relevant to them. It would also avoid the issues discussed above.

## Example C

**Cochrane Review:** Several Cochrane Reviews on treatments for Bell's palsy, including drugs, physical therapy and surgery.

### Dissemination product:

*Evidently Cochrane* blog: "[Bell's palsy: facing up to uncertainty](#)". The blog included a mother's story about her son's experience of Bell's palsy and explored the Cochrane evidence on various treatments.

### Audience:

People with Bell's palsy and those supporting them.

### How many images needed?

Three. A featured image to appear above the blog and two for within the blog.

### Problems and considerations

- We were unable to find a photo of someone with Bell's palsy that we had permission to use.
- The blog includes experience shared with us for the blog by a mother, about her teenager's experience of Bell's palsy. Some contributors wish to share photos, but this mother and son wished to remain anonymous and chose names for themselves to use in the blog.
- The blog is long so there is a lot of text to break up – images are a good way of doing this.

### Possible solutions

#### Images showing treatments

The treatments for which evidence is presented in the blog are drugs, surgery and physical therapies such as face massage. We would not want to use a treatment image for the main image, as it could suggest that the blog was about only that treatment or make one treatment seem more important than another. A treatment image could be used within the blog next to the relevant text.



The image on the left would be a reasonable choice, showing unidentifiable tablets and suggesting treatment uncertainties or choices. The middle image of assorted tablets has good visual impact, but some of them look like treatments that were not included in these reviews – such as fish oil tablets and senna. The image (right) of surgery would need checking with someone with relevant knowledge, to see if the details of it are credible for the operation discussed in the blog. An alternative would be to show a treatment setting such as a hospital building or clinic.



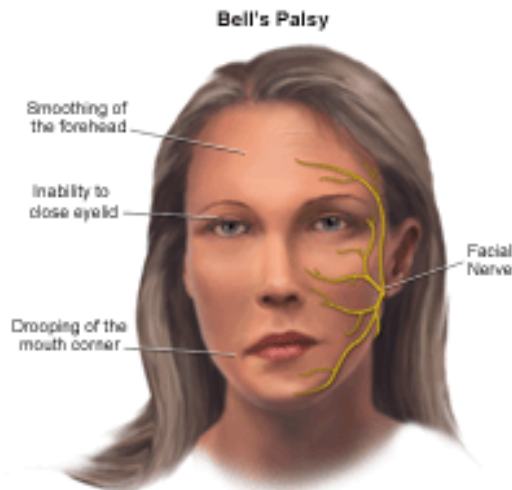
## An image illustrating specific information about the review findings



This image could be used (with an explanatory caption) to support information in the text, based on high-certainty evidence, that ten people would need to be treated with corticosteroids to avoid one person not recovering completely. Images like this, representing people in media such as paper, can introduce variety, be visually impactful and, can be appropriate for sharing in many different contexts because they do not have details about setting or ethnicity for example.

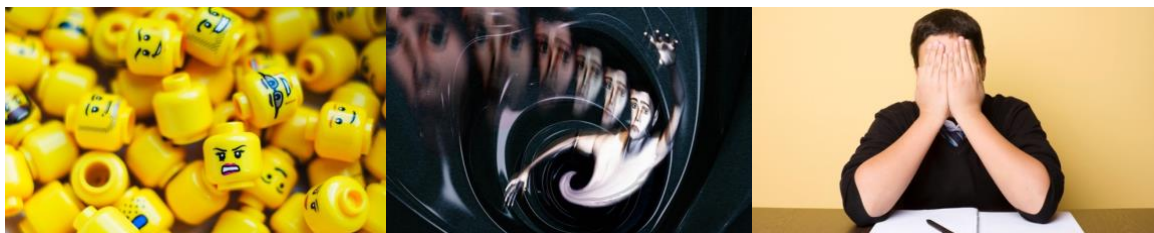
## Images relating to people with Bell's palsy

We were unable to find an image of someone with Bell's palsy with permission to use, so we had to look for alternatives.



“Bell's palsy”, [John Hopkins Medicine](#)

This textbook illustration of the features of Bell's palsy was initially used in the blog, but we have now removed it. The text is difficult to read and would be particularly problematic for some people, such as those using screen readers as aids to accessing online content, and for translation of the blog into other languages by others in Cochrane, who would normally be able to re-use the included images.



These three very different images are all ones we could have considered, although they are not specific to Bell's palsy. It would be a good idea to seek feedback from representatives of the target audience (people with Bell's palsy and those supporting them), including the mother and son whose experiences are shared in the blog. At the time we published this blog (in 2015), we did not think to do this.

The image on the top left, like the paper figures on page 49, could be a good alternative to an image of real people, but might their expressions feel relatable or insensitive and off-putting to our target audience? These are possible issues to explore when gathering feedback.

The image on the top right is one we used. The boy in this photo is covering his face, so he could be hiding visible signs of Bell's palsy; in the same way, we could have shown someone from behind, their face not visible. However, we have since learned more about the sensitivities around images and the importance of seeking feedback from target audiences (ideally) or others with relevant knowledge. We now know that there are mixed feelings about these sorts of images in relation to many health conditions and the implication, perhaps, that there is something to feel embarrassed or ashamed about, that the person might want to be hidden.

The image at the bottom leaves lots of scope for interpretation and could feel relatable but again it would be important to ask for feedback and preferably from several people from the target audience.

### **Art by someone with lived experience of Bell's palsy**



Artwork by Julia Wollner

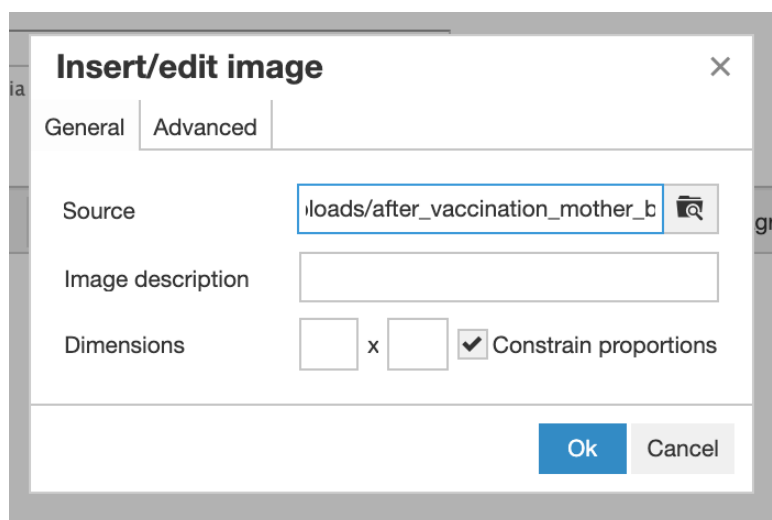
This photo shows Julia Wollner with some of the art she made in response to her own experience of Bell's palsy. We used this in the blog. Using art made to express someone's experience of a health condition can be an impactful choice that is authentic. It may resonate well with audience members who also have lived experience of the condition and can be a good way to share something of the experience with health professionals and others working with or for those with it. It is important to check permissions around use of the image and to credit it appropriately (shown in the text below the image).

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## Appendix 4: Adding alt text to images

### How to add alt text for images used on Cochrane websites

When inserting images into Cochrane websites, add alt text in the box that says, 'Image description' (see below).



### How to add alt text for images used in Word documents

In Microsoft Word, you can add alt text by right clicking on an image and selecting 'edit alt text'. (In older versions of Word, right click on an image and select 'format image' to find the 'alt text' option). You can then either add a text description or tick a box to mark the image as decorative. Recent versions of Microsoft Word may suggest a text description.

### How to add alt text for images used in social media posts

Alt text is not only used on your websites or documents, it should also be used on social media platforms. You can find step-by-step guidance on adding alt text to images on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram here: <https://b2wgroup.com/how-to-add-alt-text-to-imagery-on-social-media/>.

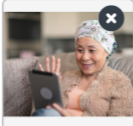
### How to add alt text for images in social media posts scheduled on Buffer

You can also add alt text if you are using a platform such as Buffer to schedule your social media posts. To do so, have the post composer open, add the image, and then click on the image to add text in the box that appears 'add a description for people with visual impairments'. See an example below:

Can video calls reduce social isolation and [#loneliness](#) in older adults? A recent Cochrane Review, bringing together all the available research, has explored this timely question. Here is a brief explanation of the evidence: <https://buff.ly/2ZwO2UX>

[#COVID19 @CochraneCollab](#)

Click to expand & add description



7

Post Schedule: Jun 13, 9:45 Edit Save

First, click on the image to add a description.



418 Save

Second, add text into the box that appears at the bottom of the image and click 'Save'. In this case, the image is purely decorative and so a null alt text description should be added (by adding "" in the description box).

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