

Handout D Grading the Evidence

Level A – The conclusion is supported by good evidence.

The evidence consists of results from studies of strong design for answering the question addressed. The results are both clinically important and consistent with minor exceptions at most. The results are free of any significant doubts about generalizability, bias, and flaws in research design. Studies with negative results have sufficiently large samples to have adequate statistical power.

Level B – The conclusion is supported by fair evidence.

The evidence consists of results from studies of strong design for answering the question addressed, but there is some uncertainty attached to the conclusion because of inconsistencies among the results from the studies or because of minor doubts about generalizability, bias, research design flaws, or adequacy of sample size. Alternatively, the evidence consists solely of results from weaker designs for the question addressed, but the results have been confirmed in separate studies and are consistent, with minor exceptions at most.

Level C – The conclusion is supported by limited evidence or expert opinion.

The evidence consists of results from studies of strong design for answering the question addressed, but there is substantial uncertainty attached to the conclusion because of inconsistencies among the results from different studies or because of serious doubts about generalizability, bias, research design flaws, or adequacy of sample size. Alternatively, the evidence consists solely of results from a limited number of studies of weak design for answering the question addressed. Finally, the support for a particular opinion may consist of statement of informed, respected authorities based on their experiences, descriptive studies of reports of expert panels.

Level D

No evidence from clinical studies or authoritative sources was found

Source: Dietitians of Canada (PEN). www.dietitians.ca