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Authors should set out clearly the objectives of the study and state whether the study was retrospective or prospective. Randomised trials must include the items included in the CONSORT statement (see 'Randomised Controlled Trials', above).

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Wherever possible a graphical presentation should be used to illustrate the main findings of a study. Base the graph on data points unless the sample sizes are very large. When plotting life tables always indicate the numbers of individuals at risk at the various times of follow-up. Avoid the use of 'error bars' showing 1 standard deviation or standard error.

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