Narrowing and Broadening Your PubMed Search

To Decrease the Number of Your Results
1. Use Filters (e.g., Publication date, language, age, gender, etc.)
2. Choose subheadings for your MeSH term if you have not already done so.
3. Change your MeSH terms to Major MeSH terms (i.e. in MeSH record, check box next to "Restrict to MeSH Major Topic")
4. Choose "Do not include MeSH terms found below this term in the MeSH hierarchy" in the MeSH record. Remember that the NLM indexers assign the most specific MeSH term they can find to the article record.
5. Add more aspects of your topic as MeSH such as ethnicity, geographic locations (e.g., AND California)
6. Add more aspects of your topics as keywords if no MeSH term is available.
7. Use phrase searching when performing keyword searches (e.g. "cleft lip")
8. Use field tags with your keyword searches - title[TI], title/abstract[TIAB], MeSH[MH], Major MeSH[MAJR], author[AU]

To Increase the Number of Your Results
1. Use "OR" between MeSH terms when searching if the terms are somewhat similar
2. Click on Similar articles to have PubMed find other similar articles.
3. Do a keyword search to pick up the most recent articles (e.g. In Process records) and articles that will not get MeSH terms (e.g. PubMed - as supplied by publisher, PubMed)
4. Use the broader MeSH term from the MeSH record tree.
5. Browse your MeSH term and look at the Year introduced for your term and search under the Previous Indexing MeSH terms.
6. Search under the See Also MeSH terms in the MeSH record.
7. Use truncation * in your search term to find variant forms of the word (e.g. carcino* => carcinoma, carcinogen, carcinogens, etc.)