### INTRODUCTION

#### Item 3: RATIONALE.

Describe the rationale for the review in the context of what is already known.

**Example.** “Reversing the trend of increasing weight for height in children has proven difficult. It is widely accepted that increasing energy expenditure and reducing energy intake form the theoretical basis for management. Therefore, interventions aiming to increase physical activity and improve diet are the foundation of efforts to prevent and treat childhood obesity. Such lifestyle interventions have been supported by recent systematic reviews, as well as by the Canadian Paediatric Society, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, and the American Academy of Pediatrics. However, these interventions are fraught with poor adherence. Thus, school-based interventions are theoretically appealing because adherence with interventions can be improved. Consequently, many local governments have enacted or are considering policies that mandate increased physical activity in schools, although the effect of such interventions on body composition has not been assessed.”

#### Explanation.

Readers need to understand the rationale behind the study and what the systematic review may add to what is already known. Authors should tell readers whether their report is a new systematic review or an update of an existing one. If the review is an update, authors should state reasons for the update, including what has been added to the evidence base since the previous version of the review.

An ideal background or introduction that sets context for readers might include the following. First, authors might define the importance of the review question from different perspectives (e.g., public health, individual patient, or health policy). Second, authors might briefly mention the current state of knowledge and its limitations. As in the above example, information about the effects of several different interventions may be available that helps readers understand why potential relative benefits or harms of particular interventions need review. Third, authors might whet readers' appetites by clearly stating what the review aims to add. They also could discuss the extent to which the limitations of the existing evidence base may be overcome by the review.