



Scan with your smartphone to get an e-version of this leaflet. You might need an app to scan this code.



# ***About Functional Neurological Disorder (FND)***

***Information for  
patients and carers***

**Department of Neuropsychology**



Scan with your  
smartphone to view a  
video about FND from  
our neurology  
department.

## ***What is Functional Neurological Disorder (FND)?***

FND is the diagnosis given to symptoms that are due to a problem with the functioning of the nervous system, and not damage or disease of the nervous system.

The difference between FND and neurological conditions such as Multiple Sclerosis or Parkinson's Disease is that FND isn't caused by structural disease of the nervous system (brain, spine and nerves). The **structure** of the nervous system is normal and has no damage, but the **function** of it has changed.

One way to understand this is by thinking about a computer when it doesn't work properly. Often if a computer breaks down, this is because of the "software" (the programming and coding that makes it work) rather than the "hardware" (the keyboard, hard drive). FND can be thought of in the same way: the hardware of your body (brain, nerves) is not damaged, but the software is not working as it should.

About one third of people who attend a general Neurology clinic will receive a diagnosis of FND.

## ***What are the symptoms of FND?***

FND symptoms affect different people in different ways. Symptoms can include:

- Chronic pain
- Poor concentration and memory
- Fatigue
- Gait and balance problems
- Headaches and migraines
- Involuntary movements (shakes, tremors, jerks)
- Paralysis and weakness
- Non-epileptic seizures
- Sensory changes
- Sleep disturbances
- Speech problems
- Bladder and bowel changes
- Visual impairments
- Difficulties doing daily activities.

These symptoms are real and not imagined. You have no conscious control over them.

It's common in FND for symptoms to come and go and they can be variable.

## ***How can my doctor be sure I have FND?***

Your neurologist or GP has taken a detailed history of your symptoms and medical background. They also conduct a neurological examination that can identify positive signs of FND.

Occasionally other investigations may be required, such as MRI, CT scan etc., which can rule out other conditions. FND can exist alongside other neurological conditions.

## ***Who is involved in my care?***

Your neurologist or GP (whoever gave you your diagnosis) has discussed how they came to their decision, and given you an opportunity to ask questions.

Some people with FND can improve just from having their diagnosis explained clearly. Others may find their symptoms affect their lives which can cause distress. Your neurologist or GP may refer you to specialist services, if you need them, including:

- Psychology
- Physiotherapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech and Language Therapy
- Psychiatry
- Dietitian.

## ***How can I look after myself?***

Depending on your symptoms, there are many tools you can use to help you manage and live with FND.

There are also lots of useful websites, online groups and books that are helpful for those with FND. Take a look at the “Useful Links” section at the end of this leaflet for more information.

### **Awareness**

Understanding your symptoms and how they affect you in different situations is important. This is different for each person with FND. What’s helpful for you may not be helpful for someone else.

### **Managing activity levels**

Your energy levels change day by day. Managing this means not overdoing it when you feel energetic, only to then “crash” and need to take a day or two to recharge.

Pace yourself. Do a small amount of activity every day, know when to stop, and build up your energy levels to improve your overall daily activity.

## **Sleep**

Sleep is very important to physical and mental wellbeing. Having a consistent bedtime routine and avoiding certain food, drinks and activities (such as using screens on phones or tablets) are known to improve your sleep.

There are other tips for managing sleep in the links on pages 7 to 9.

## **Gentle exercises (such as yoga or tai chi)**

Yoga and tai chi are meditation and gentle movement techniques that can help stretch muscles and improve wellbeing.

## **Managing stress**

Research shows that stress negatively affects symptoms. Stress can focus your attention on symptoms and this can make them worse or more noticeable. There are a number of techniques that you could use to manage stress (see page 6).

## **Mindfulness**

Meditation, being aware and focusing on the present moment can help ease anxiety and fear about the future as well as worrying thoughts about the past.

## Tips to manage stress

### Do:

- ✓ Listen to music/podcast
- ✓ Watch TV or read a book
- ✓ Find company: talk to a friend/loved one
- ✓ Take a short walk/gentle exercise
- ✓ Engage in a hobby, new or ongoing
- ✓ Something for others (such as volunteering)
- ✓ Focus on what you **can do** rather than what you can't.

### Don't:

- ✗ Do too much. Be realistic about what you can do.
- ✗ Overload yourself. Ask for help or space when needed.
- ✗ Ignore your emotions. It can be overwhelming at times, sharing this or noting your feelings in a diary can help.

Not all of these suggestions will work for everyone – find what works for you. Be creative! Try some activities (like those suggested above) or even join a group (such as a book group, local history group etc that you would enjoy).



## ***Will I get better?***

There is no definite cure for FND. Everyone's journey with FND is different. Some people get better just by understanding their diagnosis. Others learn how to live with and manage their symptoms.

Each person should find strategies to help them manage their symptoms in their everyday lives. What works for one person won't be of any benefit to another – it's a case of finding what works best for you.

While there is no cure, research is going on to help us understand ways of managing FND, and why and how some people recover fully.

## ***Useful links***

### **Websites and online support:**

#### **NeuroSymptoms**

A patient's guide to FND written by a consultant neurologist.

 **[www.neurosymptoms.org](http://www.neurosymptoms.org)**

#### **FND Hope**

FND Hope UK is managed by people who have experience of FND and its impact.

 **[contact@fndhope.org](mailto:contact@fndhope.org)**

 **[www.fndhope.org](http://www.fndhope.org)**

## **FND Action**

Founded by people diagnosed with FND who want to provide help and support to others.

✉ **[contact@fndaction.org.uk](mailto:contact@fndaction.org.uk)**

📱 **[www.fndaction.org.uk](http://www.fndaction.org.uk)**

## **NHS approved free apps**

A website with apps that have been reviewed by the NHS.

📱 **[www.my-therappy.co.uk](http://www.my-therappy.co.uk)**

## **Samaritans**

Provide emotional support to anyone in emotional distress, struggling to cope, or at risk of suicide.

☎ **116 123**

(available 24/7 for someone to chat to)

📱 **[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)**

## **Mindful**

Dedicated to inspiring, guiding, and connecting anyone who wants to explore mindfulness.

📱 **[www.mindful.org](http://www.mindful.org)**

## **Books:**

### **Overcoming Functional Neurological Symptoms: A Five Areas Approach**

Written by Chris Williams.

Available from Amazon and other quality booksellers.

## ***How can I comment on this leaflet?***

If you'd like to let us know what you think about this leaflet, you can scan the code below to go to our survey.

All answers will be treated in the strictest confidence.



FND  
Feedback survey

**Scan me:**



QR code for Project ID 4786

**This leaflet is also available in large print.  
Other formats and languages can be  
supplied on request. Please call Quality  
Development on 01224 554149 for a copy.  
Ask for leaflet 1848.**

Feedback from the public helped us to develop this leaflet.  
If you have any comments on how we can improve it,  
please call 01224 554149 to let us know.

Please note that NHS Grampian is not responsible or liable for the quality of the information, resources or maintenance of external websites. Any advice on external websites is not intended to replace a consultation with an appropriately qualified medical practitioner.

Department of Neuropsychology

Leaflet supplied by:

©NHS Grampian  
Revised September 2022  
Quality Development, Foresterhill