

Motor neurone disease (MND): what you need to know

For aged care and support workers

In motor neurone disease, the nerve cells that send messages from the brain to the muscles slowly stop working. This makes it harder for the person to move, speak, swallow, and breathe. The body gets weaker over time and changes can happen quickly for some people.

NOTE: Always follow the person's care plan. Tell the supervising nurse or healthcare team if the person has new or worse symptoms, has pain, feels uncomfortable, or needs different care.

Thinking and behaviour

About half of people living with MND do not have changes in their thinking or behaviour. Others may have changes that affect everyday life. About 1 in 10 develop frontotemporal dementia, affecting thinking, behaviour, and language.

Care tips: Do not assume the person's thinking has changed. If changes happen, keep routines the same. Give one instruction at a time to support their understanding.

Communication and speech

The person may find it hard to talk but can still understand what other people say.

Care tips: Give the person time to communicate. Check you have understood them correctly. Do not shout. Use their preferred way of communicating. Learn more: mndaustralia.org.au/communication

Mouth care

Mouth changes such as dry mouth and drooling are common. They can make the person's mouth unhealthy and uncomfortable.

Care tips: Clean the whole mouth regularly. Check for pain, mouth sores, or food stuck in the mouth. Offer support with their mouth care as needed.

Eating well

Eating, drinking, and swallowing can take more effort. This can make it hard for the person to keep a healthy weight.

Care tips: Offer food and drinks that match the person's needs. Watch if they are eating and drinking enough. Help make mealtimes calm and unhurried.

Read these tips about caring for the needs of someone living with MND.

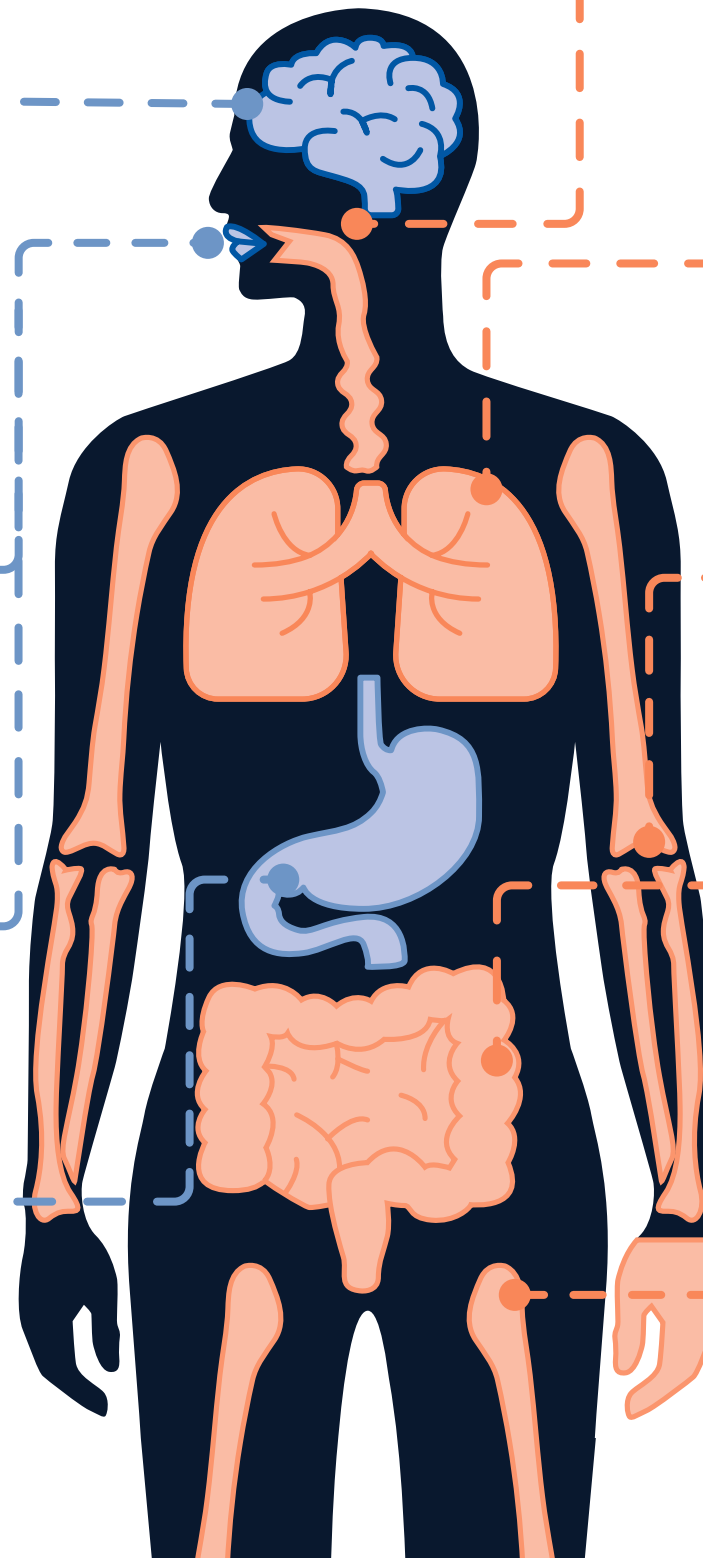


To learn more about MND and find information in your language, visit mndaustralia.org.au/communication

To set up training for your organisation, or to ask questions about supporting someone living with MND, call the **MND Info Line 1800 777 175** Monday to Friday 9:00am to 4:30pm AET



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Swallowing

Swallowing can become difficult. Food, drinks, medication, or saliva can cause coughing or choking.

Care tips: Follow the person's recommended food and drink textures. Allow plenty of time for meals. Watch for coughing, choking, or changes in their swallowing.

Breathing

Breathing, coughing, and talking may become harder, especially when lying flat.

Care tips: Ask the person before lying them flat. Help them find a comfortable position to make breathing and talking easier. Help with their breathing equipment if they use it.

Positioning

Weak muscles can make it harder to move and change positions.

Care tips: Help the person change position regularly. Support their head, arms, and legs. Ask if they are comfortable or have pain.

Bowels

Constipation (trouble going to the toilet) is common and can cause pain or discomfort.

Care tips: Encourage the person to drink fluids if they can swallow safely. Support them to follow a regular toilet routine. Watch for pain, bloating, or changes in bowel habits.

Arm, hand, and leg weakness

Weakness in the arms, hands, and legs can make everyday tasks challenging, including walking, standing, holding, and picking up objects.

Care tips: Help the person with everyday activities as needed. Keep important items and the call bell within easy reach. Ask about their pain and make tasks as easy and safe as possible.