

PATIENT INFORMATION

What is Functional Neurological Disorder? (FND)



FND is a condition where patients experience neurological symptoms (such as weakness, movement problems, seizures, or sensory issues) that are not caused by structural damage to the nervous system, but by a **disruption in brain function**. It's real, often disabling, and not "made up" or consciously controlled.

Functional, Not Structural

- In FND, the *structure* of the brain and nervous system is typically normal.
- The problem lies in *how the brain functions* (the brain networks), especially in areas involved in attention, emotion, and motor control.

Common Symptoms

- Motor symptoms: limb weakness, tremors, gait disturbances, abnormal postures.
- Sensory symptoms: numbness, tingling, pain.
- Seizures or episodes of loss of consciousness (known as Non-Epileptic Attack Disorder (NEAD) or sometimes referred to as dissociative episodes).
- Speech issues: slurred speech, whispering, inability to speak.
- Vision problems: blurred vision, visual loss.

How is it Diagnosed?

FND is diagnosed by a **neurologist**, based on your medical history and a physical examination.

Doctors look for **positive signs**, like certain patterns of movement or response, that are *typical of FND* and not of other neurological diseases.

Scans and tests may not be required as they are often normal, and that's expected with FND.

What Causes FND?

- A combination of factors:
 - **Psychological** (e.g., trauma, stress, anxiety, but not always present).
 - **Neurological** (malfunction in brain networks that control movement and attention).
 - **Social** (life events, support systems).

Importantly, FND can happen in people with no obvious psychological history.

How Is It Treated?

By a multidisciplinary approach:

- **Education:** understanding the diagnosis is the first step to recovery.
- **Physiotherapy:** especially tailored “functional” physio focusing on normal movement patterns.
- **Psychological therapy:** CBT, trauma-focused therapy if relevant.
- **Occupational therapy and lifestyle support:** e.g. establishing routines, sensory therapies, employment support.
- It is also helpful **to go back to basics** and ensure your essential needs are met, i.e., sleep, diet, social, cognitive stimulation and physical exercise.
- **Pharmacology:** there is no medication or cure for FND. However, some patients may require medications for related problems such as depression or sleep disorders.

Is Recovery Possible?

Yes. Some people make a full recovery. Others see improvement over time with support.

Recovery is different for everyone, and it's not your fault if it takes time. Early diagnosis and the right support can make a big difference.

Resources

FND Hope – <https://fndhope.org>

→ Global patient advocacy charity providing excellent, accessible information for patients and clinicians.

Neurosymbols.org – <https://www.neurosymbols.org>

→ Developed by a neurologist Professor Jon Stone who specialises in FND. It's one of the most widely respected and used clinical resources in the UK and internationally.

NHS UK – Functional Neurological Disorder -

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/functional-neurological-disorder/>

→ Official NHS overview of symptoms, diagnosis, and treatment options.

FND Action - www.fndaction.org.uk

→ UK charity supporting those with FND

Mind – www.mind.org.uk

→ Support for mental health and wellbeing

In Summary

- FND is a real, brain-based condition.
- It causes symptoms like weakness, seizures, or movement issues.
- It is diagnosed by positive signs, not just by ruling things out.
- Treatment focuses on retraining the brain and body, with support.
- You are not alone, and help is available.

Contacting the Neurology Service

For any non-urgent, FND specific queries, please call **01905 763333** and ask for extension 38944 or contact us via email at wah-tr.neurologysecs@nhs.net

If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.