GAME ON, DIFFERENTLY:

DESIGNING FOR PLAYERS WITH MND

Motor Neurone Disease (MND) is a **progressive neurological condition** that affects the nerves (motor neurones) in the brain and spinal cord. These nerves control the muscles that allow us to move, speak, swallow, and breathe. When they stop working, the muscles gradually weaken and waste away. MND is a fatal disease and there is currently no cure.

MND can affect people differently, but common symptoms that will impact a person's ability to game include muscle weakness in the hands and arms, loss of dexterity and fine motor movements, muscle cramping and twitching, speech difficulties, fatigue and poor endurance, and in some cases changes in cognition.

Importantly: People living with MND are still avid gamers, friends, thinkers, and creators, and their diagnosis doesn't affect their desire to engage socially or recreationally.

QUICK STATS

- 35% of gamers with MND said continuing to game was **very important.**
- 43% of gamers with MND surveyed **play games daily.**
- Main reasons for gaming were **reducing boredom, entertainment & for relaxation.**
- Mobile devices such as phones and tablets were the most popular gaming device (likely as they are portable, easily accessible and lightweight) but gaming consoles and PC gaming are still favoured by many people with MND.
- Most gamers with MND reported fatigue, trouble pressing buttons, keeping up with the games, and communicating as key difficulties they face during gaming.

HEAR FROM GAMERS WITH MND

"I get to sit and play without being reminded my body is failing"

"Gaming helps bridge loneliness and lack of community issues - that makes it an invaluable life aid for me. Did I mention I can RUN in games! 'Nuff said"

"It gives you something to do in the day... gaming's kind of a way to get away from everything"

HOW YOU CAN HELP PEOPLE WITH MND

1. Put Accessibility Front & Centre

- Make accessibility features **easy to find** in the main menu.
- Use **demo options** to help players customise controls.

2. Enable Deep Customisation

- Allow **full remapping** of controls
- Include options for **toggle vs. hold, auto-fire, and sensitivity adjustments**.
- Provide **control presets** for common assistive devices.

3.Support Eye-Tracking & Voice Input

- Eye-gaze technology (like Tobii) can be life-changing!
- Offer optional **voice command functionality** for key actions or menus.

4.Offer Assist Modes without Punishment

- **Auto-aim, pause-anytime, slowed gameplay, or single-button** mode increase inclusion.
- Don't lock achievements or progress behind full-input play modes.

5. Support Connection through communication

- Voice to text options, common chat phrases, or use of predictive AI enhances inclusion.

6.Co-Design with the Community

- Partner with gamers using adaptive technology, or with organisations like us, to co-design accessible features.

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ACCESSIBILITY MATTERS

MND is a **progressive disability**, meaning a player's physical needs will change over time. What starts as slight hand weakness may eventually require full use of adaptive equipment.

That's why **universal, flexible design** is key. Players with MND may rely on:

- Remappable keys
- One-button or no-button inputs
- Auto-aim and motion assist
- Hands-free menu navigation
- Progressive difficulty scaling
- Switches or adaptive controllers
- Eye-gaze systems or voice controls

A one-size fits all approach to accessibility won't work for people with MND and so we need game developers to look for ways to ensure gaming remains accessible as their condition changes.

CO-DESIGN WITH US

MND Australia's **Lived Experience Network** (LEN) is an excellent way for Game Developers to connect with people living with MND who are passionate about gaming. Together with our State MND Associations, we can connect you with our MND community who love to game to help you develop inclusive and accessible games that they, and many others can enjoy!

SCAN ME