

Motor neurone disease (MND) is a life-limiting progressive neurological disease that can affect people in a variety of different ways. When a person in your workplace is diagnosed with MND, employers and colleagues can play a critical support role.

If one of your employees is living with MND, some things you may like to consider include:

- be sensitive about approaching the situation
- maintain open communication
- seek advice on how best to support your employee's dignity and autonomy in the workplace
- ensure you are meeting your legal obligations.

This guide includes information and things to consider to ensure a supportive and inclusive work environment.

Employment and MND: about the series

MND can affect many aspects of a person's life, including work. This guide is one of a series that provides information about managing employment and MND. There is also a guide for people living with MND, and one for carers.

Understanding MND

MND affects the nerve cells called motor neurons. Motor neurons control voluntary muscles, such as those involved in movement, speech, swallowing and breathing. No two people will present with the same symptoms, and it is hard to predict the changes or pace at which symptoms will develop.

Symptoms of MND include:

- mobility changes
- limb weakness
- changes in speech or communication
- saliva control
- fatigue
- emotional lability (when emotional responses are different to how a person actually feels).

Some other, less obvious changes may also impact roles at work, including anxiety, depression or mild cognitive changes.

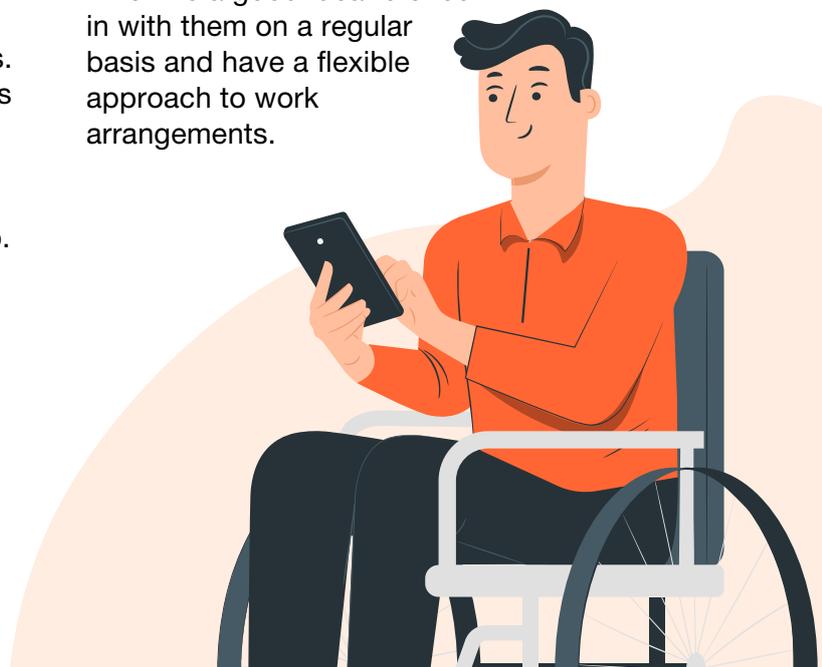
The impact of MND on a person's role depends on several factors:

- type and severity of symptoms
- type of work
- the tools or equipment used
- the duties of the role
- the surrounding working environment.

Learning about MND and how it may progress will help you support your employee. Every person living with MND will have their own, unique set of symptoms. However, managers and colleagues can give support by seeking out reputable information about MND.

This will help you to learn how a person's daily function, and working role, may be impacted. Visit mndconnect.org.au to find out more.

MND is a progressive condition. This means the person's needs will change over time. It's a good idea to check-in with them on a regular basis and have a flexible approach to work arrangements.



Legal obligations

Disclosure of MND

There is no legal obligation for an employee to disclose a medical condition, such as MND, unless their symptoms impact their work duties or put themselves or others at risk.

If an employee does choose to disclose their condition, you can assist them to stay productive and safe by discussing possible adjustments.

It is illegal for an employer to treat an employee (or job applicant) differently because they have MND. If you do, this is discrimination. In addition, employers are required to take 'reasonable' steps or adjustments to support an employee. See 'Reasonable adjustments' below.



Protecting privacy

If an employee discloses they have MND to their employer, this information is to remain confidential. It is not to be shared with others in the organisation, unless the employee gives written consent.

Providing support

Reasonable adjustments

With the right support a person living with MND can continue to be a valuable member of the team. To enable an employee with MND to stay safe and productive at work, employers are required to make reasonable adjustments to the employee's role.

Some examples of reasonable adjustments include:

- flexible work hours
- altering performance requirements
- allowing more breaks
- working from home
- supporting workplace changes such as specific equipment or modifications.

Employers may be eligible for Australian Government funding towards the costs of reasonable adjustments through the Employment Assistance Fund, which is part of the Disability Employment Service (DES). Employees or employers can explore this Australian Government funding initiative, and other employment support options by calling Job Access on 1800 464 800 or visiting the Job Access website jobaccess.gov.au

A supportive environment

You can support your employee through cultivating an inclusive workplace culture. If the employee has shared their diagnosis with colleagues, check with them to find out how the workplace can best support them in their working role.

Be mindful that employment is not only important for financial reasons.

Employment may also contribute to:

- a sense of identity and purpose
- independence
- motivation
- maintaining a routine
- staying connected with colleagues and the community.

There are significant psychological impacts following a diagnosis of MND. These can affect how a person feels about their work. They may take some time to adjust to changes in their role or letting go of work. Providing support and considering their needs can have a positive impact for the individual and their family.

Practical tips for the workplace

Symptoms of MND can change quickly. Regular check-ins and open communication should help the employer and employee to stay well informed.

Some ways a workplace can support an employee living with MND may include:

Regular breaks

Having regular rest breaks and allowing more time to complete tasks can help conserve energy.



Role adjustments

Adjustments to how your employee works, the equipment or workstation they use or the broader workplace environment may enable them to continue in their role. If needed, re-evaluate tasks and discuss modifying duties to accommodate the individual’s changing needs or explore alternative tasks within the individual’s skill set.

Consider the physical demands of the role, whether it requires the following:



Physical strength



Repetitive movements



Fine motor skills



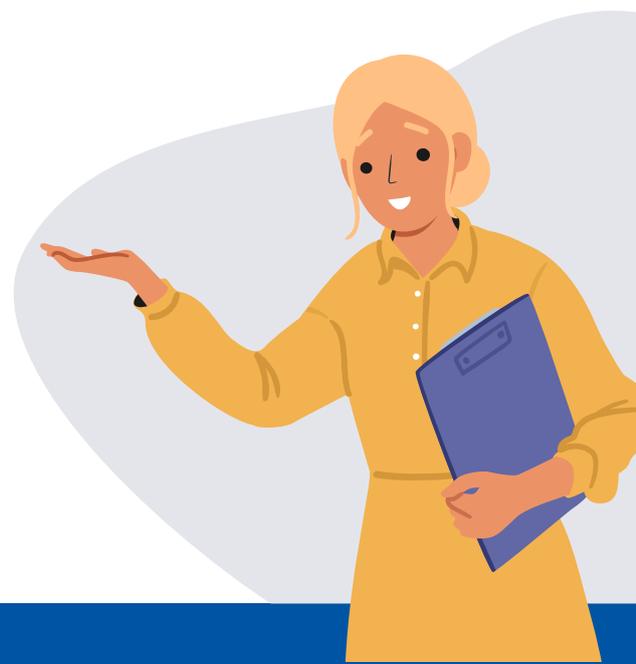
Prolonged sitting, standing or awkward positions

Health professional advice

Your employee may engage health professionals to advise them on specific workplace strategies or assistive technology that can enhance productivity, safety and communication. These might include an occupational therapist or speech pathologist.

Mental health support

When there is a person impacted by MND in the workplace, they, their colleagues and their employer may experience mental health challenges. If your workplace offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) it is worth making employees aware of their options. Alternatively, employees can access mental health support via referral from a local general practitioner (GP).



Services and support

MND Info Line

1800 777 175

9am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday

mndconnect.org.au



MND Associations

MND NSW, ACT, NT	mndnsw.org.au
MND QLD	mndqld.org.au
MND SA	mndsa.org.au
MND Tasmania	mndatas.asn.au
MND Victoria	mnd.org.au
MND WA	mndawa.asn.au

Other guides in this series

- Employment and MND: for people living with MND
- Employment and MND: for carers

Other useful websites

Employment Rights and Workplace Flexibility

Aim to familiarise yourself with the resources listed below. These give guidance and financial support for workplace adjustments. Sharing this information with the employee can be helpful.

Job Access

1800 464 800 | jobaccess.gov.au

Fair Work Ombudsman

13 13 94 | fairwork.gov.au

Australian Human Rights Commission

1300 656 419 | humanrights.gov.au

Employer Advisory Service

smallbusinessfairwork.gov.au/employer-advisory-service

Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissions

ACT Human Rights Commission

hrc.act.gov.au

Anti-Discrimination NSW

antidiscrimination.nsw.gov.au

NT Anti-Discrimination Commission

adc.nt.gov.au

Queensland Human Rights Commission

qhrc.qld.gov.au

Equal Opportunity Commission South Australia

equalopportunity.sa.gov.au

Equal Opportunity Tasmania

antidiscrimination.tas.gov.au

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

humanrights.vic.gov.au

Equal Opportunity Commission WA

wa.gov.au/organisation/equal-opportunity-commission

Entitlements

Services Australia

servicesaustralia.gov.au

ATO (Early Access to Superannuation)

ato.gov.au/individuals-and-families/super-for-individuals-and-families

Superannuation & insurance law glossary of terms

berrillwatson.com.au/expertise/glossary

Acknowledgements

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We are proudly delivering projects for the Peer Support and Capacity Building (PSCB) grant for the NDIS.

This guide provides general information to help you understand your work rights and entitlements after an MND diagnosis. However, everyone's situation is unique and laws can change over time. We encourage you to speak with professionals who can give you advice tailored to your specific circumstances—this might include contacting the Fair Work Ombudsman (13 13 94), Services Australia (132 717), or seeking legal, financial, or medical advice. Please always double-check the latest details with official sources before making important choices about your employment and entitlements.