

Motor neurone disease - recreation and leisure

Recreation is important for people with motor neurone disease (MND). Where possible, activities enjoyed before the disease should be kept up or modified so that they can still be enjoyed.

Rest and recreation are also important for carers. Carers should seek support from other people and make sure they take regular breaks from their caring role.

Reading

To make it easier for the person with motor neurone disease to enjoy reading:

- Use an adjustable table or bookstand and a non-slip mat to stop books from slipping.
- Use a stationer's rubber thimble or a short wooden rod to turn pages more easily.
- Have steel paper clips attached to each page and use a small magnet attached to the end of a short stick to make page turning even easier.
- Use an electric page-turner if it is easy to operate and effective.
- E-book readers, also called e-book devices, are portable electronic devices that are designed primarily for the purpose of reading digital books and periodicals.
- Some portable multimedia players and smartphones include a text viewer and can be used as an e-book reader.

Talking books

Audio books are available from local libraries or from Vision Australia. Library members of Vision Australia can borrow a wide range of titles in a variety of formats, including audiotapes and CDs. These are free for loan through postal delivery across Australia. A catalogue is available.

TV, DVD and portable music players

When using electronic equipment:

- Use remote controls.
- Use a DVD or video recorder, if possible, to see programs at the time you choose.
- Preset tuning buttons on radios.
- Use portable music devices, such as MP3 players, with easy-to-use controls.

Painting

People who cannot paint with their hands may be able to paint by holding the brush or pen in their mouth. Ask your dentist about a special mouthpiece. Watercolour pens and pencils are cleaner to use than conventional brushes and paints.

Writing

To make writing easier:

- Build the pen or pencil up with elastic bands, pimple rubber or foam, special pen grips or high-density foam tubing.
- Push the pen through the holes in a practice golf ball.

- Use a pad of paper rather than loose sheets.
- Use a non-slip mat to prevent the paper slipping.
- Use a felt-tip pen.
- Markers are easy to hold and make bold strokes.

Computers

Computers need minimal finger pressure and a rest can be used to support the arms. They can also be used as communication aids by people whose speech is affected. Computer games and social media platforms can be a way to connect to other people.

Get advice before buying a computer and choose one that can be adapted to meet your changing needs. You can also seek advice from the Independent Living Centre.

Sewing and craftwork

To help with sewing and crafts:

- Use long dressmaking pins with large heads.
- Anchor your pincushion with a suction cup.
- Use needle threaders for both hand and machine needles.
- Try electric or lightweight scissors.
- Clamp embroidery frames to a table.
- Seek assistance from an occupational therapist or the Independent Living Centre.

Cards and board games

You can still enjoy cards and board games if you:

- Use a cardholder.
- Use an automatic card shuffler.
- Use large cards.
- Play games for which large size pieces are available (chess, draughts, scrabble, dominoes).

Sport

Many people with MND participated in sport before the onset of their illness. Although further active participation may be limited, you can keep up your interest and commitment by maintaining links with local clubs and enjoying companionship and support.

Parks

Many parks have wheelchair access. Contact Parks Victoria for further information.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Your local community health centre
- Your local council
- Local sporting and hobby clubs and organisations
- Motor Neurone Disease Association of Victoria Tel. 1800 806 632
- Independent Living Centre Tel. (03) 9362 6111
- Parks Victoria Tel. 131 963

Things to remember

- Recreation and leisure are very important for all people, including people with MND and their carers.
- Activities should be continued after onset of the illness, where possible, and modified if necessary.

- Even if participation in sport or leisure activities is limited, it is good to remain involved in clubs and organisations to keep up interest and companionship.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

Motor Neurone Disease Association of Victoria

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