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## Motor neurone disease (MND) - independence at home

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### Summary

- As MND progresses, you may find that you have difficulty with everyday items in your home.
  - The right aids and equipment can you retain some independence and quality of life in your own home when living with MND.
  - There are professionals who can help you identify the appropriate resources, aids, equipment and support.
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Motor neurone disease (MND) causes people to have some difficulties with everyday activities. Household items can become difficult or impossible to use. However, a range of devices and aids is available to make life easier, as well as some common sense approaches to improving comfort around the home.

### Chairs for people with MND

The support provided by a chair, as well as its height and stability, are important for people with MND. It will help if you:

- Make a chair more comfortable by using cushions or a headrest.
- Use firm, upright armchairs.
- Use chair blocks to raise the height of an existing chair.
- Use manual or electrically operated riser or recliner chairs.
- Use pressure-relief cushions.
- Ask an occupational therapist or physiotherapist for advice.

### Beds for people with MND

Comfort and manoeuvrability in bed can be a major problem. Try:

- bed blocks to raise the height of the bed and make it easier to get in and out
- a monkey pole (a triangular device that hangs over a bed), a backrest, posture pillows or sheepskins
- mattress elevators to raise you from the lying to the sitting position
- a deep mattress or other specialist mattresses such as airbeds, waterbeds or net beds
- an adjustable bed – manual or electric
- a mobile or overhead hoist. A careful assessment by a therapist is vital to make sure that the correct hoist is chosen for the comfort and safety of both the person with MND and their carer.

### Working height for people with MND

Tasks such as eating or writing become easier if your forearms are supported at a suitable working height. Try using:

- an adjustable cantilever table or a box (cut to the required height) placed on the table
- a bed tray (with small legs) on the table
- forearm supports, or mobile arm supports (attached to a wheelchair).

### Use of tools and utensils for people with MND

To accommodate weakened hand muscles:

- Enlarge the handles of items like cutlery and toothbrushes by using epoxy resin to mould to the shape required or rubber tubing to slip over handles.

- Use a strap with a pocket that fits across the palm of your hand.
- Choose lightweight items.
- Ask your occupational therapist for advice.

### **Light and power for people with MND**

You can improve access if you:

- have rocker or touch pad switches installed instead of conventional switches
- bring sockets up to a convenient height by using extension leads.

### **Alarms, intercoms and computers**

Room-to-room communication and alarm calls can be arranged with:

- simple units such as plug-in baby alarms or sophisticated units that incorporate radio, video, music, fire and burglar alarms
- telephone systems that will automatically contact emergency services, family members or friends
- beepers that can be adapted to call for assistance from both inside and outside the house
- a buzzer or doorbell wired to a light touch switch or pressure pad
- alarms and computers that can often be operated by remote control
- micro-switches that can be triggered by movement in any part of the body.

### **Electrical devices for people with MND**

You can buy electrical devices that open and close doors, windows and curtains, or turn the radio or TV on and off. All these devices help maintain independence, but it may be easier and cheaper to use readily available devices such as plug-in timers to control heaters or switch on lights. Ask your occupational therapist for advice.

### **Doorknobs and locks for people with MND**

It often helps to provide extra leverage on knobs and keys by:

- using a multipurpose knob turner
- installing larger knobs on door locks
- enlarging key grips.

### **Telephones for people with MND**

There are many telephone devices available. You could:

- Use a mobile telephone or smartphone, which are lightweight and easy to operate.
- Use switch adaptable mobile phones.
- Use a hands-free telephone so you can talk without lifting the handset.
- Use a telephone with the ability to store phone numbers that can be dialled by pressing just one button.
- Use the **Telstra Disability Equipment Program**, which may be able to provide you with a special telephone that suit your needs.

### **Carrying tasks for people with MND**

With weakened muscles, carrying things can be a problem. Try using:

- an apron with big pockets or a bag slung diagonally over the shoulder or round the waist
- a tray with non-slip surfaces
- purpose-built, stable trolleys.

### **Where to get help**

- Your **GP (doctor)**
- **MND Victoria** Tel. **(03) 9830 2122** or **1800 806 632**

- Specialists such as neurologists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and psychologists (your doctor can refer you)

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Motor Neurone Disease Association of Victoria

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