



PG17

Saliva management pathway for Motor Neurone Disease

Motor Neurone Disease (MND) results from the progressive loss of motor neurones in the brain and spinal cord. These are the nerve cells that control movement. It leads to muscle weakness and can cause difficulties with movement, breathing, swallowing and speaking.

Saliva problems are a common and often distressing symptom for people with MND. This pathway is designed as a practical tool to support health and social care professionals in assessing and managing saliva problems effectively. It was created by the Expert Core of the MND Professionals' Community of Practice.

While the evidence base for saliva management in MND is still emerging, this pathway brings together current best practice, clinical experience and expert guidance to help alleviate this challenging symptom and improve comfort and quality of life.

1. **Managing saliva problems**
2. **Pathway for thick or tenacious saliva**
3. **Pathway for thin saliva or sialorrhoea**
4. **Pathway for dry mouth**
5. **Appendix – examples of assessment tools**

1. Managing saliva problems

Saliva issues can significantly impact quality of life, contributing to discomfort, anxiety and an increased risk of choking.

Difficulties may include:

- excessive thin, watery saliva (sialorrhoea)
- thick, tenacious saliva
- a mixture of both thick and thin saliva – in this case, it is recommended that thick saliva is addressed first.

Dry mouth may also be experienced at the same time.

As every person with MND experiences the disease differently, it is essential that saliva management is tailored to the individual and reviewed regularly. Successful secretion management requires the clinician to complete a full multifactorial assessment to select the right treatment solution. See pages 6–7.

It's also important to always get specific details from the person with MND on:

- the location of secretions
- the pattern of when the secretions are problematic
- the secretions' viscosity and site of origin
- the person's distress level and any co-morbidities.

Management can also sometimes include drugs. See the individual pathways on the following pages for a list of medications. The pathways include a space where local recommended dosages can be recorded. For dosages, always refer to the **Electronic Medicines Compendium**, the **British National Formulary (BNF)** or the **Palliative Care Formulary (PCF)**.

Remember also that anticholinergic drugs are contraindicated in older adults due to the potential of confusion. Consider using an anticholinergic load scale calculator to calculate the anticholinergic burden for your patient.



Information to share with people with or affected by MND:

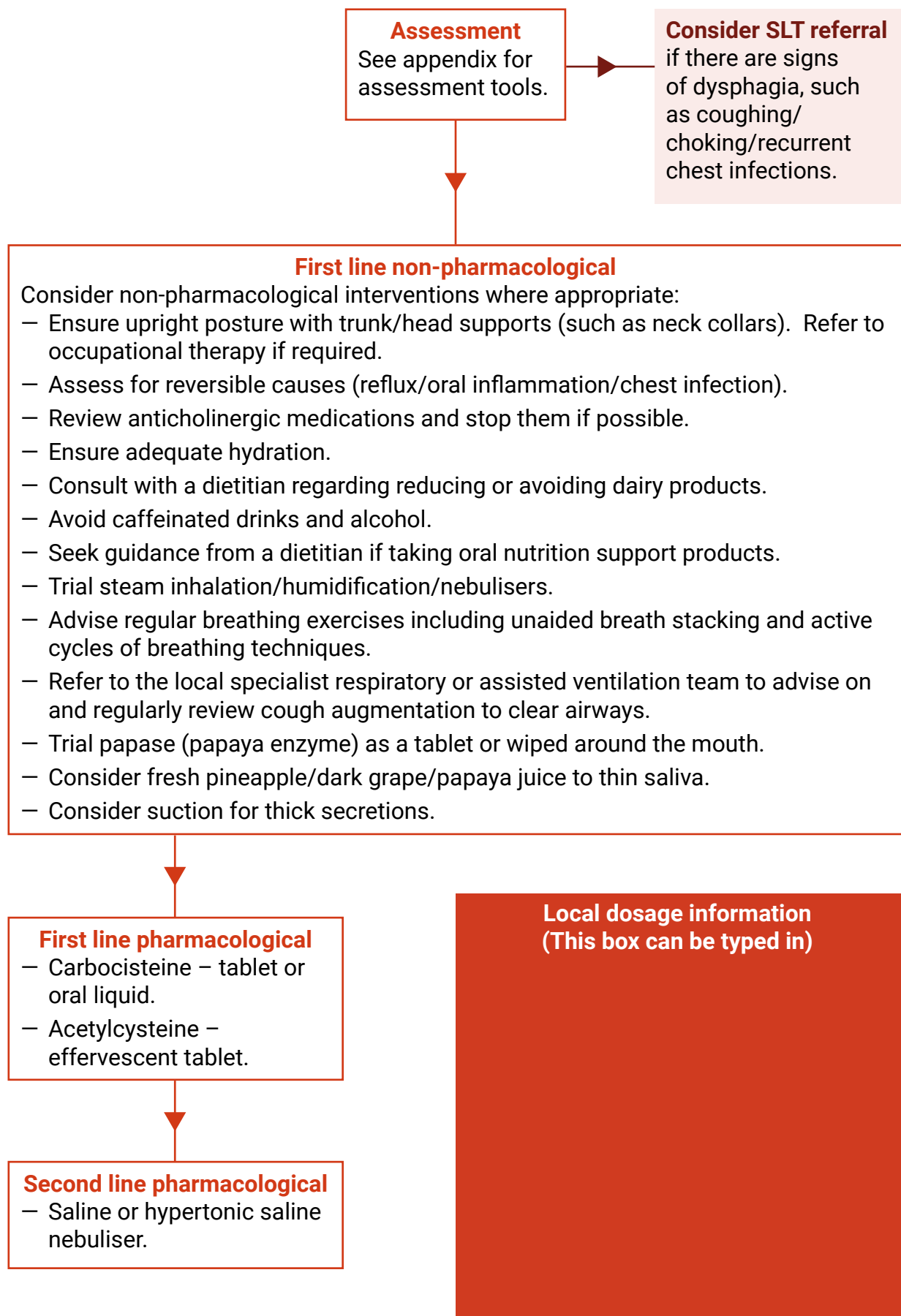
Information sheet 7A – Swallowing difficulties
Information sheet 7B – Tube feeding
Information sheet 11B – Mouth care

Information for professionals:

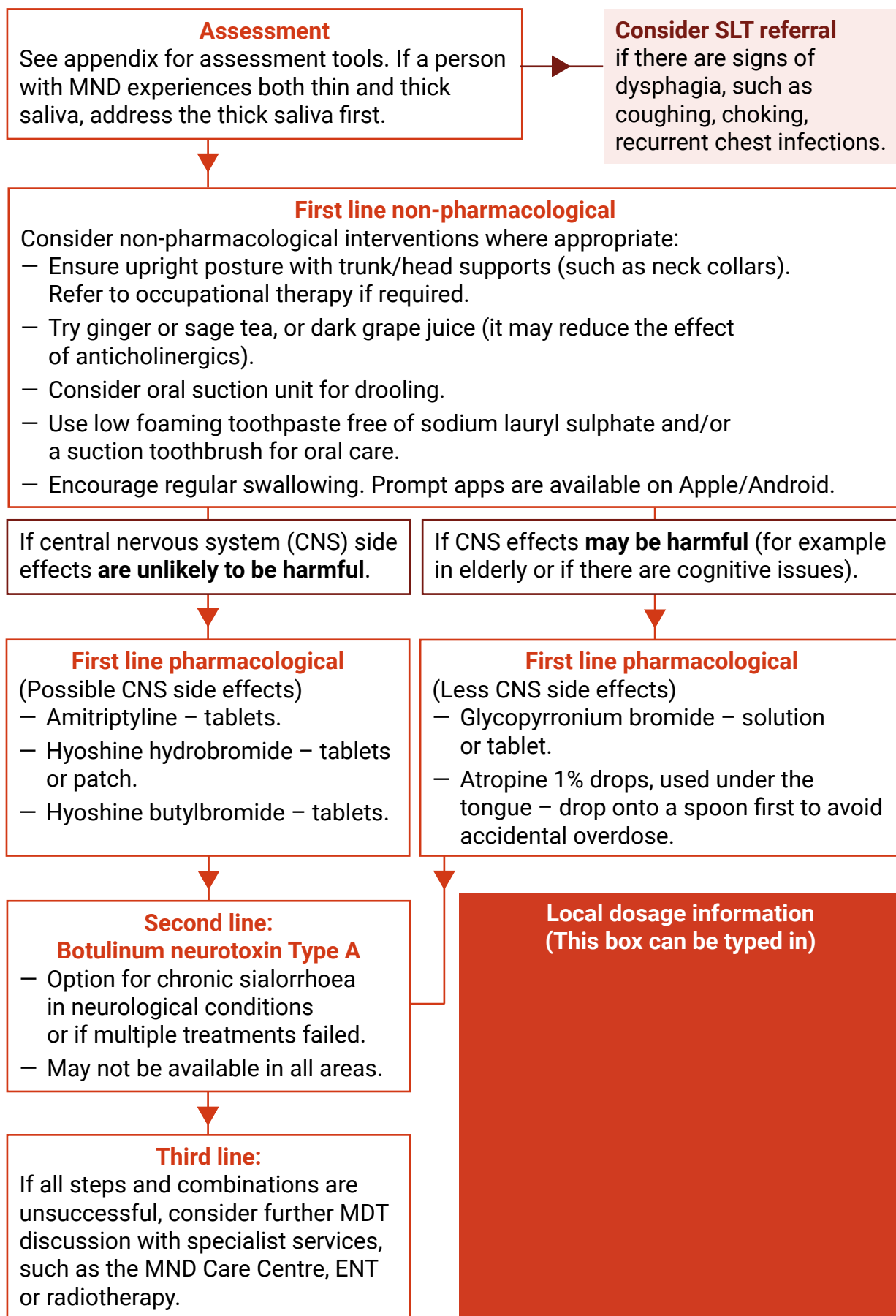
Information sheet P3 – Managing saliva problems in MND
Information sheet P9 – Oral suction

See page 7 for details of how to order publications.

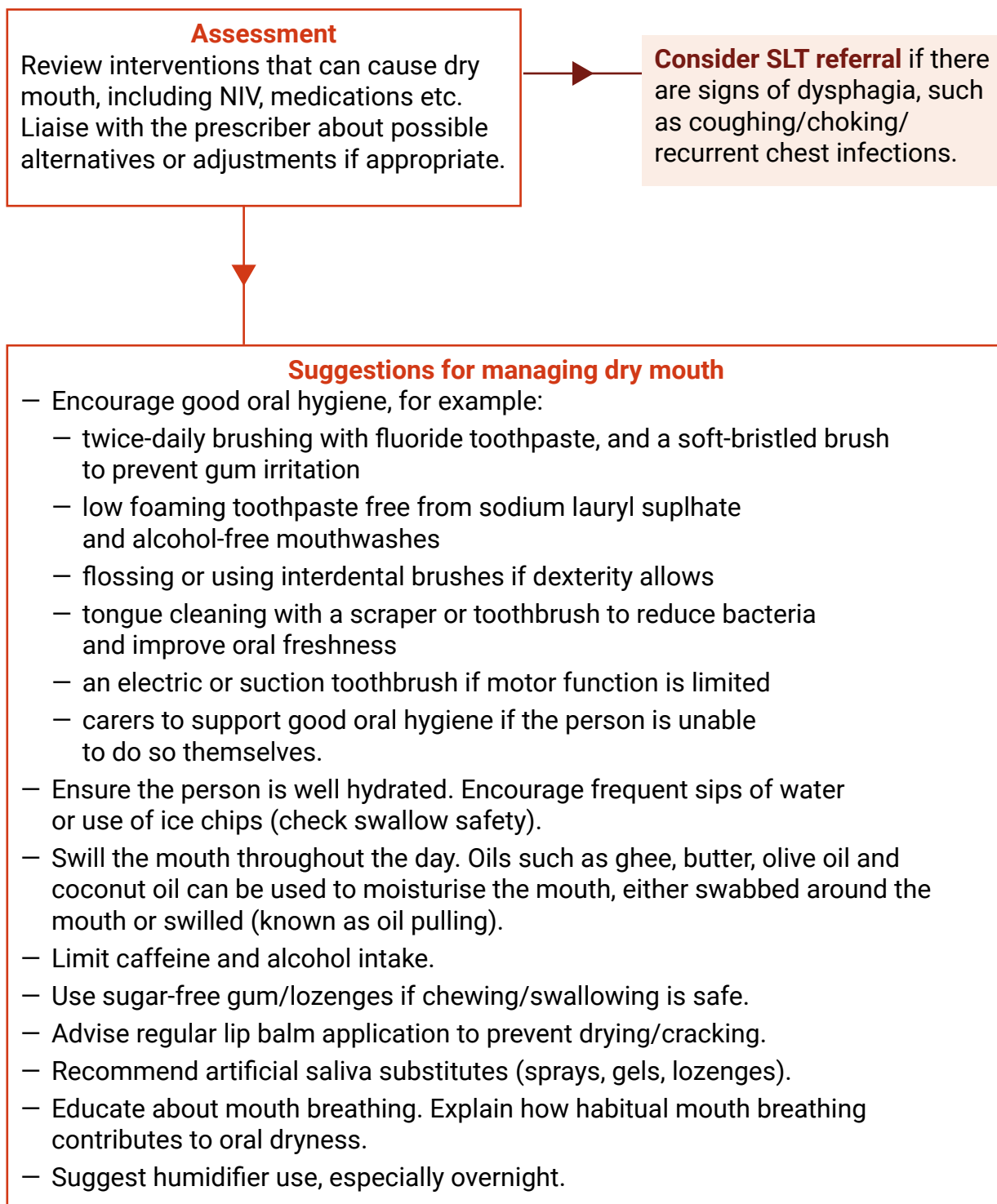
2. Pathway for thick or tenacious saliva



3. Pathway for thin saliva or sialorrhoea



4. Pathway for dry mouth



5. Appendix – examples of assessment tools

The saliva assessment tools listed below are presented in alphabetical order and are intended as a starting point for further exploration. Each tool offers a different approach to assessing saliva-related symptoms, and their inclusion here aims to support informed decision-making in clinical practice.

For accurate use and interpretation, please refer to the original research publications associated with each tool to gain a comprehensive understanding of their application and limitations.

If you are using a digital version of this document, the links are clickable.

Clinical saliva scale for MND (CSS-MND)

Research has highlighted the clinical saliva score for MND (CSS-MND) to be an easy-to-use tool to assess and reflect the impact of saliva problems. Scoring is based on a questionnaire completed by the person with MND or their carer.

McGeachan AJ, et al. 'Developing an outcome measure for excessive saliva management in MND and an evaluation of saliva burden in Sheffield.' Amyotroph Lateral Scler Frontotemporal Degener, 2015;16:108–13.

Drooling severity and frequency score (DSFS)

Score	Severity	Score	Frequency
1	Dry (never drools)	1	No drooling
2	Mild drooling, only lips wet	2	Occasionally drools
3	Moderate drooling – drool reaches the lips and the chin	3	Frequently drools
4	Severe drooling – drool drops off chin and onto clothing		
5	Profuse drooling – drooling off the body and onto objects		

Find the tool in the “Supporting information” menu.

Evatt ML, et al. 'Dysautonomia rating scales in Parkinson's disease: sialorrhea, dysphagia, and constipation – critique and recommendations by movement disorders task force on rating scales for Parkinson's disease.' Mov Disord. 2009 Apr 15;24(5):635-46.

Oral secretion score

This tool was developed to measure oral secretions in correlation with the ability to swallow saliva and clear the upper airway in people with MND.

Cazzolli PA, et al. 'The oral secretion scale and prognostic factors for survival in subjects with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.' Respiratory Care. 2020 Aug;65(8):1063–76.

We value your feedback

Your feedback helps improve our information for the benefit of people living with MND and those who care for them. Visit smartsurvey.co.uk/s/mndprofessionals or email your comments to education@mndassociation.org.

If you would like to help us by reviewing future versions of our information resources, please email us at education@mndassociation.org.

How to order our publications

Our publications are free for anyone with or affected by MND or Kennedy's disease, including professionals. Health and social care professionals can also order items on behalf of someone with or affected by MND or Kennedy's disease.

Download from mndassociation.org/publications or contact MND Connect to order hard copies. Call 0808 8026262 or email mndconnect@mndassociation.org.

How we can support you and your team

Our MND Connect helpline offers practical and emotional support, information and signposting to people with MND, carers, family and professionals. They can also provide further information about our services mentioned below.

Email: mndconnect@mndassociation.org

Phone: **0808 8026262**

MND Association website

Our website offers supporting information on MND, our work, services, and how to get involved.
mndassociation.org/professionals

Stay updated on events, publications and opportunities for professionals.
mndassociation.org/educationupdate
X: [mndeducation](#)
Bluesky: [mndeducation.bsky.social](#)

Information resources

We produce high quality information for people with MND, carers, families and professionals, available in multiple formats and languages.
mndassociation.org/pro-info-finder
mndassociation.org/careinfofinder

Education

Our education programme aims to improve standards of care and quality of life. Opportunities include webinars and face to face equipment training.
mndassociation.org/education

MND Professionals' Community of Practice

A peer led group supporting cross disciplinary learning in MND care. Membership can contribute to CPD and offers access to networking and learning events.
mndassociation.org/cop

Local support

We offer online and local peer support, plus trained volunteers who provide practical help by phone, email or visits.
mndassociation.org/local-support

We fund and develop specialist care centres and networks across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, offering multidisciplinary care.
mndassociation.org/care-centres

Financial support

We offer a range of grants to support people living with MND, their families and unpaid carers. These are not in place of any statutory funding that should be available.
mndassociation.org/getting-support

MND register

The Register aims to collect information about everyone with MND in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to support care planning and research.
mndregister.ac.uk

Research into MND

We fund and promote research that leads to new understanding and treatments, and brings us closer to a cure for MND. We also produce information sheets on MND research for people with or affected by MND.
mndassociation.org/research

Acknowledgements

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**Every day we support people affected
by Motor Neurone Disease.
Because with MND, every day matters.**