

FUNCTIONAL NEUROLOGICAL DISORDER

Your neurologist has diagnosed you with a functional neurological disorder. Our multi-disciplinary treatment team at South Health Campus is committed to giving you the highest standard of care, and providing you with treatment strategies for this condition.

WHAT IS FUNCTIONAL NEUROLOGICAL DISORDER?

Functional neurological disorder (FND) describes neurological symptoms, which may include:

- Problems with movement like tremor, jerks, spasms, weakness or difficulty walking
- Sensory symptoms like numbness, tingling, pain or dizziness
- Problems with fatigue, thinking, memory or concentration

FND is caused by problems with how the brain *functions*, which can be thought of as a problem with the “software” of the brain. This is different from other neurologic conditions such as multiple sclerosis or stroke, where we see problems with the “hardware” of the nervous system on an MRI scan. The diagnosis of FND is based on the clinical examination. Blood and imaging tests are usually normal, and typically not required to make the diagnosis.

FND is a very common problem. It is important to know that your symptoms are real and not purposefully produced, and may not be the same as others with FND. These symptoms can cause disability and distress, but are treatable.

WHAT CAUSES FND?

There are many reasons why an individual may be susceptible to FND. These should be thought of as *risk factors* and not direct causes. We break these reasons down into three groups:

1. Predisposing factors: Things that happened before the symptoms started
2. Precipitating factors: Things that happened at the time the symptoms started
3. Perpetuating factors: Things that happened after the symptoms started

Each of these can be broken down further into biological, psychological, and social factors. Biological factors may include other underlying medical conditions. Psychological factors can include how you personally interpret symptoms or information. Social factors could be stressful work or home environments. It is unclear why these lead to FND in some people, while others do not develop symptoms.

WHAT DO I DO NOW?

Your neurologist will work with you to determine the most appropriate treatment plan, which can include nursing, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, psychologists, social workers, and speech language pathologists. You will be put in touch with the appropriate team members based on your symptoms. In the meantime, it is important to learn more about this condition. Please visit the following websites, which provide excellent information on FND and related symptoms:

- www.neurosymptoms.org
- www.fndhope.org

Please contact your neurologist should you have any further questions or concerns.