

PATIENTS & CARERS

Functional movement symptoms in FND

Functional weakness, tremor, gait problems and dystonia are among the most common FND presentations. They are real, often fluctuating, and frequently improve with specialist physiotherapy approaches.

What this can feel like

A limb that will not move well, shaking that comes and goes, a walking pattern that changes with attention or fatigue, or abnormal postures. Symptoms may improve briefly with distraction and worsen when you try harder — that pattern can be part of FND, not proof of “faking”.

What often helps

- Specialist neuro-physio experienced with functional movement (when available)
- Retraining automatic movement rather than forcing effort alone
- Reducing fear of movement while staying safe from falls
- Addressing pain, sleep and fatigue alongside movement work
- Clear explanation so you are not fighting your own nervous system

At home — while you wait for rehab

Do

- Use walking aids if they reduce falls
- Practise short, calm movement sessions
- Note triggers (stress, sleep, attention)
- Ask for falls-risk advice if needed

Be careful with

- All-or-nothing exercise challenges
- Pushing through pain into collapse
- Comparing every day to your best day
- Ignoring new stroke-like symptoms

Safety first

Call 999 for a suspected stroke, first seizure, severe breathing difficulty or other medical emergency. For urgent concerns that are not an emergency, contact NHS 111 where available or your local urgent-care service. Do not assume new or different symptoms are FND.

Continue overleaf for practical next steps, a personal plan and sources →

MOVEMENT SYMPTOMS · NEXT STEPS

Ask what movement retraining means for you

FND-informed physiotherapy may use tasks that help movement become more automatic. The useful approach depends on the person and symptom. Ask a therapist to demonstrate a safe practice task and explain how to adapt it on a difficult day. Do not copy demanding exercises simply because they helped someone online.

Make home practice safe and meaningful

Choose a goal linked to daily life and agree how much practice is appropriate. Ask about pain, fatigue and falls before progressing. An occupational therapist may help with routines, equipment or adapting tasks. Review walking aids with a professional; do not suddenly abandon equipment you need for safety.

Recognise progress without constant testing

Progress may mean a safer transfer, less help with dressing or a more manageable outing. Repeatedly testing a weak limb can become frustrating. Discuss useful ways to track function with your therapist. New sudden weakness or speech changes must still be assessed urgently, even with an established FND diagnosis.

My next steps — discuss with your care team

A safe daily task I want to improve

My therapist's practice advice and review date

Sources and further reading

- Neurosymptoms: FND physiotherapy
neurosymbols.org/en/treatment/physiotherapy-exercise/
- Neurosymptoms: occupational therapy
neurosymbols.org/en/treatment/occupational-therapy/

More practical help: What is FND? · Symptom Library · Appointment prep