



12C

Travel and transport

Information for people with or affected by motor neurone disease

If you are living with motor neurone disease (MND), getting around can be challenging, but there are ways it can be made easier.

This information sheet covers what you may want to think about when arranging travel and transport, in the following sections:

- 1: **What should I think about when planning my journey?**
- 2: **What if I'm travelling by road?**
- 3: **What if I'm travelling by rail?**
- 4: **What if I'm travelling by air?**
- 5: **What if I'm travelling by ferry?**
- 6: **How do I find out more?**

 This symbol is used to highlight **our other publications**. To find out how to access these, see *Further information* at the end of this sheet.

 This symbol is used to highlight **quotes** from other people with or affected by MND.



The MND Association has been certified as a producer of reliable health and social care information.

www.england.nhs.uk/tis

1: What should I think about when planning my journey?

Although MND can make travelling more challenging, there are ways to make it easier. The following suggestions may come in useful when planning your journey:

- with all forms of transport, plan your journey early
- consider all parts of the journey, including at departure, while onboard, at stopovers, transfer journeys and arriving at your destination
- discuss your needs with any travel agents, tour operators, transport organisations and accommodation you will be using during your trip
- make sure any equipment you are taking with you is in good working order before setting off
- allow extra time in case of any delays
- book any help you need in advance
- research your destination, and take contact details for local facilities you may need, such as wheelchair repair shops, pharmacies or other facilities.

If you are a wheelchair user:

- carry a small tool kit and a puncture repair kit for emergency repairs to your wheelchair
- if you are travelling by plane, you may not be able to take some tools due to security, so check what is allowed by your airline
- It can be useful to know the weight and size of your wheelchair, both unloaded and with you sitting in it.

Rica and the Department of Transport have developed a guide telling you what you can expect from trains, coaches and buses under the Disability Discrimination Act. It is available from www.rica.org.uk/content/accessible-public-transport



For information about planning a holiday that meets your needs, see: Information sheet 12D – *Planning a holiday*

2: What if I'm travelling by road?

Getting there by car

When travelling by car, plan your journey before setting out. Decide in advance where and when you will stop for breaks. Motorway service stations all provide disabled parking and accessible toilets but service stations on smaller roads may not.

Accessible toilets may be locked and you may need a NKS key (formerly known as RADAR key) to unlock them. Keys can be purchased from Disability Rights UK. They also publish a guide which lists all the NKS toilets throughout the UK. See *Useful organisations* in section 6: *How do I find out more?* for contact details.

If you use a wheelchair and need the temporary use of a wheelchair accessible vehicle, you can hire one. The Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for Disabled People has a fleet of wheelchair accessible vehicles available for hire by people with MND. See *Useful organisations* in section 6: *How do I find out more?* for contact details.

Some tollgates have discounts for people with disabilities. Check with the Department of Transport before travelling in case you need to make an application before arrival. See *Useful organisations* in section 6: *How do I find out more?* for contact details.



For more information about driving and MND see:

Information sheet 12A – *Driving*

Information sheet 12B – *Choosing the right vehicle*

Getting there by taxi

The types of vehicles used by taxi companies vary greatly. Taxi companies may advertise as being wheelchair accessible but this may only mean they can carry small, manual wheelchairs.

Finding a taxi able to carry a large electric wheelchair can be difficult. Knowing the size and weight of your wheelchair, as well as its height with you sitting in it can be helpful. Taxi drivers will not accept passengers unless there is enough space between the top of your head and the taxi ceiling. If you find it difficult to find a taxi firm who can help, contact the local council who may be able to offer advice.

Most black cabs in London have wheelchair access, but this again depends on the size of your wheelchair. Always try to book in advance and ask the size of wheelchair the taxi can take.

Getting there by bus or tram

Most buses are wheelchair accessible. They usually:

- have ramps to help with boarding
- can be lowered by the driver to reduce the step required to get on
- have a designated wheelchair space with an easily accessible bell.

People with disabilities may be entitled to a bus pass which allows free travel in England, Scotland and Wales during off peak hours. Contact your local council for details.

Various cities in the UK operate tram services and some have level access. Check with the relevant council to find out more about the accessibility of their tram service.

Community transport and Dial-a-Ride

Community transport services are usually run as not-for-profit schemes for local people by local people. These services may include door-to-door transport, as well as trips to shopping centres. Contact your local council for information on schemes in your area.

Dial-a-Ride provides taxis or adapted vehicles which you can book to take you from door to door. You usually need to register with your local service, and pre-book your journeys. The service varies from region to region and to find out more, contact your local Dial-a-Ride operator through directory enquiries or the internet.

Disabled parking schemes and concessions

The Blue Badge scheme provides parking concessions for some people with disabilities. To find out whether you qualify for a Blue Badge and where it can be used, contact your local council.



For more information about the Blue Badge scheme see:
Information sheet 12A – *Driving*

When driving abroad, some countries will honour the Blue Badge scheme whilst others will have their own schemes. Check with your tour operator to find out more about schemes in the area you are visiting.

If you live in Northern Ireland, Blue Badges are managed by Transport NI. To apply, visit www.nidirect.gov.uk and search for *Blue Badge scheme*. See *Useful organisations* in section 6: *How do I find out more?* for full contact details.

If you live in London, the local councils operate a freedom pass scheme for free travel on public transport for people with disabilities. Contact your local council to find out more about this scheme. Blue Badge holders may be able to get a reduction of the London congestion charge from Transport for London. See *Useful organisations* in section 6: *How do I find out more?* for contact details.

3: What if I'm travelling by rail?

Getting there by train

In the UK, many stations have been adapted to make travel easier for passengers with disabilities. You can book a journey the day before you depart and receive an itinerary of each station and time by email.

As with all forms of transport, it is essential to book any help you need in advance. National Rail ask for 24 hours notice of any help you may need.

Most trains are suitable for wheelchair and mobility scooter users. Facilities can vary so check in advance. Most trains have wheelchair spaces positioned near the disabled toilet.

You may be entitled to a Disabled Person's Railcard. If you use a wheelchair but are not entitled to a Disabled Person's Railcard, discounts may still be available on some tickets. Check with your local train company for further details.

If you are planning to travel by train abroad, check what facilities are available in your country of destination, as services vary greatly around the world.

Getting there by tube

Around a quarter of tube stations have step-free access. Some of these will still have a gap and a step between the platform and the train. Some stations have level access along the whole platform, while others have level access along part of the platform. Some stations use ramps to help you on and off the train. Tube trains on the District, Jubilee and Northern Lines have wheelchair spaces on the tube trains.

Transport for London produce a guide showing tube stations where you can use lifts, escalators or ramps between the street and the platform. Search for *avoiding stairs tube guide* at <https://tfl.gov.uk>

Staff can accompany you to the train and help you on board. They can also arrange for you to be met at your destination. To use this service, ask any member of staff. They are trained to look for people who need help to get on or off the train. If you need assistance and cannot find a staff member, they will often be in the ticket hall or on the platform.

When planning your journey, be aware that you are not allowed to be seated in a wheelchair on any escalator, even if assisted. It must be transported separately.

Tube stations and trains can be very busy during peak times, making it difficult to gain access in a comfortable way. Wherever possible, plan your travel at less busy times of the day.

Getting there by the Channel Tunnel

Eurostar offer free assistance with checking in, boarding and getting off the train. You need to advise them 48 hours before your trip of any help you might need. They ask that you arrive at least an hour before your train is due to depart.

All Eurostar stations:

- are step-free from the concourse to the platform
- provide ramp access from the platform to the train
- have accessible toilets, as do the trains.

If you use a wheelchair, you will be seated in a wheelchair space in either Standard Premier or Business Premier Class. You and one companion receive a discounted rate and pay the lowest price Standard class fare.

If you don't use a wheelchair but have reduced mobility, you will be provided with a wheelchair to travel through the station to the train. You will need to walk from the door to your seat and sit in a regular seat for your journey. The discounted rate does not apply.

Eurostar will store mobility scooters in the luggage hold for free. It is important to contact Eurostar in advance to ensure there will be enough space in the luggage hold before your journey.

Eurostar produce a guide for people with disabilities which can be found on their website. Visit www.eurostar.com and search for *special travel needs*.

4: What if I'm travelling by air?

Air travel is often the easiest way of reaching a long distance destination. Different airlines have different rules, so it is essential to discuss your specific needs and requirements when making your booking.

For some airlines, you will need to complete an Incapacitated Passengers Handling Advice Form (INCAD). This informs the airline of any specific assistance you might need. Sometimes the airline may require a Medical Information Form (MEDIF) to be completed by your doctor to show you are fit to fly.

Try to get an appointment with your doctor several months before you wish to travel, and before making any payment towards your journey or holiday. This is important in case you need breathing tests, which take time to arrange. A member of your respiratory team will usually assist if breathing tests are required.

The airline has the final say on whether you are fit to fly and can refuse to allow you to travel even if you have a MEDIF form from your doctor. It is essential to provide the airline with all of the required information to help prevent delays or cancellation of your trip.



"The changing nature of MND needs to be emphasised... It can be difficult to anticipate what your needs might be."

The Equality and Human Rights Commission have produced a guide with tips for air passengers with disabilities. It explains your rights and what to do to make sure you have the best chance of a smooth journey. You can find the guide on their website. Go to www.equalityhumanrights.com and search for *Disability and Air Travel*.

What support is available?

Most airports offer free assistance for people with disabilities. It is essential to book this with your airline, tour operator or travel agent at least 48 hours before you fly.

In European airports, you should receive support with:

- reaching check-in from the car park or train station at the airport
- registering at check in
- moving through the airport
- getting on and off the plane
- free carriage of medical equipment and up to two items of mobility equipment.

Ask ahead if assistance will be available to put your bag in overhead lockers on the plane if needed. All airports in the European Union should offer this support.

Airlines will usually require you to have someone with you at the airport and on the flight if you need support to:

- evacuate the plane in an emergency
- use the toilet
- eat and drink
- communicate with staff.

The level of support at airports outside Europe varies greatly depending on where you are travelling to. Check with your destination airport what is available.

Can I take my wheelchair or scooter on a plane?

Most UK airports are wheelchair accessible and are equipped with:

- ramps
- dropped kerbs
- automatic doors
- lifts.

Airlines will carry most wheelchairs although occasionally a weight and size limit applies so it is important to check with them before you fly. In the European Union, airlines should allow you to travel all the way to the plane in your own wheelchair, but it is best to check. If this is not possible, they may ask you to surrender your chair at check in and will provide a wheelchair for you to transfer to the plane.



“Airlines are the experts, so I always ask them for advice”.

When passing through security, if you are using a wheelchair you will be searched manually as the wheelchair will set off the metal detectors. You can ask for the search to take place in private.

When you reach the plane, the airline will supply you with a transfer chair to board with. These narrow chairs can fit down the aisles to get you to your seat. It is important to book this in advance so it is available for you to use. Ensure you also book it for any transfers or return flights that are part of your journey too.

Some airports have passenger transfer hoists that can fit down the narrow aisles. These hoists lift you directly from your wheelchair into your seat on the plane. This also needs to be booked in advance. Contact your airline to see if this service is available.

Due to safety restrictions on batteries, airlines will have different rules depending on the type of battery an electric wheelchair has. They may ask that the battery is removed from a wheelchair before it is stored in the hold. It is important to check with the airline what their requirements are in advance.

An ‘airsafe’ plug can be purchased to inhibit powered wheelchairs on flights. This device is compatible with most powered wheelchairs. It plugs into the charging socket of a powered wheelchair to immobilise it. This can prevent costly damage to wheelchairs if travelling by air, such as wires being cut or disassembly of the chair to remove the battery. Search for airsafes wheelchair plug online to purchase, as it may be available from various suppliers.

Are the toilets accessible?

The accessibility of toilets on planes varies. Most airlines have onboard wheelchairs which can be used to reach the toilet. Some larger planes may have wheelchair accessible toilets but others do not. Ask your travel operator or airline what facilities are available when booking your flight.

If you are concerned about using the toilet on a flight, get advice from your doctor or nurse. Men can be provided with an external sheath catheter to use during the flight. There is no exact equivalent for women, but there is a range of urine bottles, funnels and drainage bags available for purchase. Many of these can be used by women or men, and some may be prescribed through the NHS. Search for *urine bottle* online, or contact a health care professional, as they may be able to suggest other options.

Can I take oxygen on a plane?

Oxygen is not routinely recommended for people with MND, but if you do require supplemental oxygen during the flight for any reason you must contact the airline. Most airlines will provide oxygen but each will have their own rules regarding this. You cannot take your own oxygen supply on to the plane.

It is important to give the airline plenty of notice to arrange the oxygen. There may be a charge and you may have to provide your own face mask.



For more information, see:
Information sheet 8E – *Air travel and ventilation for MND*

Can I use ventilation for breathing support on a plane?

If you use ventilation, you may be allowed to take your own equipment on to the plane as long as it uses a dry cell battery. Check with the airline in advance what they will allow and if they require any additional documentation.



For more information about ventilation and air travel, see:
Information sheet 8E – *Air travel and ventilation for MND*

Can I take prescribed tube feeds or supplements on a plane?

Prescribed feeds and fluid supplements can be taken through security as long as they have the original label and original packaging as given by a pharmacy. The pharmacy can mark the prescription as 'Essential Medication'. An accompanying letter from your GP, consultant or dietitian is also helpful to take, as is details of the ingredients in case a new prescription is required whilst abroad.

It is worth noting that in the USA you will not be allowed to carry any fluids in hand luggage on forward connecting or internal flights. Check the security rules before you travel.

Can I take non prescribed supplements on a plane?

If you use supplements such as fortified drinks or thickeners, it may be possible to arrange delivery to Boots the Chemist or other pharmacies if there is a branch located past the airport security area. This means your supplements would have been security checked already and therefore allowed on the plane. Ordering supplies online will mean they can only deliver your items to before security, so order by phone and ensure you ask for the branch after security.

Give the pharmacy plenty of notice to ensure they are able to order in your product. They may also be able to arrange for any additional fluids that are not needed in-flight to be sealed in a transit bag for additional onward flights. Ask about this when ordering your supplements.

For large amounts, contact the manufacturer directly to find out whether they ship to the country you are visiting. Arranging delivery to your holiday destination from a supplier may be cheaper than taking it on the flight. There are similar products available in other countries, so ask the manufacturer if their products are available under a different name or if they can suggest an alternative product.

If you are travelling within the USA, you will not be able to carry fluids in your hand luggage on forward connecting or internal flights.

Can I test out getting on and off a plane before I travel?

Yes. Cabin assessments use a replica aircraft cabin to give you hands-on experience and advice about accessing a plane with a disability.

A trained occupational therapist will guide you through boarding the aircraft, the wheelchair transfer options and support systems available to use on the aircraft, helping you to plan ahead. There will be a charge for this service. See *Useful organisations* in section 6: *How do I find out more?*

5: What if I'm travelling by ferry?

Ships and ports can be difficult to access if you use a wheelchair or have walking difficulties. If you are travelling by car and book a ferry ticket in advance, you can often drive through the terminal and on to the ferry without leaving your car.

Most ferries will have lifts to all floors and disabled toilets but it is important to check the facilities when making a booking. To ensure as easy a journey as possible, let the ferry company know in advance of any help you may need.

Will I be able to get around inside the ship?

The movement of a ship can make it difficult to keep your balance if you are unsteady on your feet. Some ferry companies suggest travelling with someone who can assist you. You may find travelling on larger ferries a more comfortable option.

Can I take medical equipment on a ferry?

Operators must carry any medical or mobility equipment you need that is reasonably necessary for your trip. However, some items may not be allowed on board or may be subject to a size limit, depending on the size of the ship. Contact your travel operator for further information about specific restrictions on your journey.

What support is available?

The level of support ferry companies offer varies greatly, so check what is available when making your booking. This may include assistance with:

- registering at check-in and checking in your luggage
- getting seated and stowing away your luggage
- retrieving your luggage and leaving the ferry at the end of your journey.

6: How do I find out more?

Useful organisations

We do not necessarily endorse the external organisations listed here. These have been provided to help you search for further information if necessary. Details are correct at the time of print, but may change between revisions.

If you need help to find an organisation, contact our MND Connect helpline (see Further information at the end of this sheet for details about our helpline and how they can support you).

Automobile Association (AA)

Information on AA inspected accommodation in Britain and Ireland.

Address: Contact Centre, Lambert House, Stockport Road, Cheadle SK8 2DY

Telephone: 0800 26 20 50 (disability helpline)

Text: 07860 027999

Email: customer.services@theaa.com

Website: www.theaa.com and search for *Disabled Travellers' Guide*

Channel Tunnel/Eurostar

For information on travel through the channel tunnel or Eurostar services.

Address: Customer Relations Department, Eurotunnel Group, Ashford Road, Folkestone, Kent CT18 8XX

Telephone: 08443 35 35 35

Email: customer.relations@eurotunnel.com

Website: www.eurotunnel.com

Civil Aviation Authority

For information and advice on travel by air.

Address: CAA House, 45-59 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6TE
Email: consumerenforcement@caa.co.uk
Website: www.caa.co.uk

Department for Transport

For specific transport enquiries for the UK, e.g. toll fares and concessions.

Address: Great Minster House, 33 Horseferry Rd, London SW1P 4DR
Telephone: 0300 330 3000
Email: through website contact page
Website: www.dft.gov.uk

Direct Enquiries Ltd

Provides a search facility to find out where accessible facilities can be found.

Address: Amber House, Market Street, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1JB
Telephone: 01344 360101
Email: customerservices@directenquiries.com
Website: www.directenquiries.com

Foreign and Commonwealth Office Travel Advice

Specific advice on travelling abroad.

Address: Consular Directorate, Old Admiralty Building, London SW1A 2PA
Telephone: 08458 502 829
Email: traveladvicepublicenquiries@fco.gov.uk
Website: www.fco.gov.uk/travel

GOV.UK

Government information about transport for people with disabilities.

Website: www.gov.uk/transport-disabled

Disabled Living Foundation

A wide range of support for people with disabilities, including travel information.

Address: 4th Floor, Jessica House, Red Lion Square, 191 Wandsworth High Street,
London SW18 4LS
Telephone: 0300 999 0004
Email: helpline@dlf.org.uk
Website: www.dlf.org.uk

Disabled Persons Railcard

A railcard for people with disabilities to save up to a third on rail travel costs.

Address: PO Box 6613, Arbroath, DD11 9AN
Telephone: 0345 605 0525
Email: disability@atoc.org
Website: www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk

London Councils – Freedom Pass

Provides free travel in London for people with disabilities.

Address: Freedom Pass, 59½ Southwark St, London SE1 0AL

Telephone: 0300 330 1433

Email: info@freedompass.org

Website: www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/freedompass

London Councils – London Taxicard

Provides subsidised travel with London taxis for people with disabilities.

Address: Taxicard, 59½ Southwark St, London SE1 0AL

Telephone: 020 7934 9791

Email: taxicard@londoncouncils.gov.uk

Website: www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/services/taxicard

National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux

Help you to resolve legal, money and other problems through free, independent and confidential advice. Contact your local bureau for support.

Telephone: 03444 111 444 (for England, or contact your local CAB branch)
03444 77 20 20 (for Wales)

Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales (for Wales)

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/nireland (for Northern Ireland)

National Rail Enquiries

A central source for all national rail enquiries in England, Scotland and Wales.

Address: Customer Relations, Freepost RSEH-TBGE-HBJJ, Plymouth PL4 6AB

Telephone: 03457 48 49 50

Email: through website contact page

Website: www.nationalrail.co.uk

Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for Disabled People

Has a fleet of wheelchair accessible vehicles available to hire for people with MND.

Address: 1 Metcalfe Avenue, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 4NW

Telephone: 020 8770 1151

Email: mobility@qef.org.uk

Website: <http://qef.org.uk/our-services/qef-mobility-services/mnd-fleet-hire>

Rica

Free and unbiased reports for people with disabilities based on consumer research.

Address: G03, The Wenlock Business Centre, 50-52 Wharf Road, London N1 7EU

Telephone: 020 7427 2460

Textphone: 020 7427 2469

E-mail: mail@rica.org.uk

Website: www.rica.org.uk

Shopmobility

Hire wheelchairs/scooters throughout the UK.

Telephone: 01933 229644

Email: info@shopmobilityuk.org

Website: <http://nfsuk.org>

Transport for London - Accessibility

Information on accessible travel in London.

Telephone: 0345 222 1234

Textphone: 0800 112 3456

Email: tflaccessibility@tfl.gov.uk

Website: www.tfl.gov.uk/transport-accessibility

Try B4 U Fly

Provide cabin assessments, information about flying with a disability and hire equipment to make your journey easier.

Address: 1 Metcalfe Avenue, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 4NW

Telephone: 020 8770 1151

Email: mobility@qef.org.uk

Website: <http://tryb4ufly.co.uk>

References

References used to support this document are available on request from:

Email: infofeedback@mndassociation.org

Or write to:

Information feedback, MND Association, PO Box 246, Northampton NN1 2PR

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Further information

We provide other information sheets related to this information:

8E – *Air travel and non-invasive ventilation*

12A – *Driving*

12B – *Choosing the right vehicle*

12D – *Planning a holiday*

We also produce the following publications:

Living with motor neurone disease – our main guide to MND and how to manage its impact

Caring and MND: support for you – comprehensive information for unpaid and family carers supporting someone living with MND

You can download most of our publications from our website at:

www.mndassociation.org/publications or order in print from the MND Connect helpline.

The helpline team can also answer questions about this information, and direct you to our services and to other support:



MND Connect

MND Association, PO Box 246, Northampton NN1 2PR

Telephone: 0808 802 6262

Email: mndconnect@mndassociation.org

MND Association website and online forum

Website: www.mndassociation.org

Online forum: <http://forum.mndassociation.org> or through the website

We welcome your views

Your feedback is really important to us, as it helps improve our information for the benefit of people living with MND and those who care for them. If you would like to provide feedback on any of our information sheets, you can access an online form at: www.surveymonkey.com/s/infosheets_1-25

You can request a paper version of the form or provide direct feedback by email: infofeedback@mndassociation.org

Or write to:

Information feedback, MND Association, PO Box 246, Northampton NN1 2PR

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