

COVID-19 and Functional Neurological Disorder

Dear FND Community,

FND Hope reaches out to you during this difficult time with genuine concern and compassion. We also write to offer our support, information, and hope.

While living a life of uncertainty and isolation has become somewhat common for some of our FND family, it is understandable that many would have concerns regarding the complexities of FND and COVID-19. On page 2 you will find a letter with COVID-19 and FND specific information. A webinar will also be available with Dr Kathrin LaFaver and Professor Jon Stone to discuss COVID-19 and FND.

[Please Register for Webinar Here. COVID-19 \(London 8pm | Chicago 3pm | Sydney 7am \(Friday 20 March\)\)](#)

As an organization, we are aware that our functional family continues to battle FND symptoms even in times of a pandemic, therefore, we will continue to do our best to maintain normalcy. While all FND Hope sponsored in-person meet-ups, events and stands throughout the world have been cancelled, World FND Month online awareness events will continue throughout the month of April as long as we are able.

We are adding additional peer to peer support virtual meetings and some will offer a different format. As usual, we will continue to host webinars and Q&A's as medical professionals are available. We encourage FND members and medical professionals to invite their friends and family to participate in [World FND Month](#). Events such as the Move-A-Thon will be adjusted to encourage activity whilst we are sheltered in our home (more info to come). We will be updating our World FND Month page with more ideas to share hope and FND awareness during this time.

As an all-volunteer organization, we are asking for your patience and understanding as we manage our own and our families' health and wellness needs. Please also keep in mind that we, including the Admins on Facebook, are not medically trained and are unable to provide any medical advice. If you are unsure or need further advice or assistance, please refer to the information page or contact local health support facilities.

Let us remain united through hope because together we are strong.

Best wishes

FND Hope Team

COVID-19 PUBLIC LINKS

[NHS 111Website](#)

[UK Government / Public Health England Website](#)

[Public Health Wales](#)

[Health Protection Scotland](#)

[Public Health Agency Northern Ireland](#)

[Public Health Ireland](#)

[Health Service Executive-Republic of Ireland](#)

[Australia Public Health](#)

[New Zealand Public Health](#)

[Canada Public Health](#)

[United States Public Health-CDC](#)

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FND itself is not a risk factor for developing COVID-19.

People with FND commonly have other medical conditions which may place them at higher risk but FND itself is not a risk factor. Stressful situations can exacerbate the symptoms of any illness, so it is possible that FND symptoms may worsen for some during these uncertain times. However, there is no evidence that the severity of a COVID-19 infection would be worse in someone with FND. Long term studies of FND for example don't show that people with FND are more likely to die of pneumonia than the general population.

Who is High Risk for COVID-19 Complications?

High risk individuals seem to be over the age of 60 (over 80 being the riskiest), and having other medical disorders, especially those affecting the heart or lungs. Additionally, anyone on immunosuppressive therapy is at risk.

Physical Health Risks:

Those with FND who experience very severe reduction in mobility (e.g. being bed-bound), may be more vulnerable to chest infections generally, but this is not specifically related to having FND, but rather is the same for anyone with any cause of severely restricted mobility.

Mental Health Risks:

Those with FND who experience anxiety disorders might get worse or experience a relapse. Those with subclinical anxiety might become more severe or reach clinical thresholds resulting in new symptoms. For example: Panic attacks, potentially featuring or being triggered by breathlessness may occur in people prone to these types of attacks. **Please Note:** This will not be unique to FND and likely to occur with many other disorders.

In general, it is going to be hard to access treatments as healthcare systems are under such stress. Please consider the self-help recommendations and resources below that may help to avoid some triggers and/or in some cases minimize the severity of symptoms. The following recommendations and resources can be shared with your friends and family who would also benefit from additional support.

Recommendations:

- Continue social contact, (i.e. phone or video calls with family, friends, and [online support groups](#))
- Stay informed but resist watching and/or reading the news 24/7
- Exercise at home
- Meditation apps, (e.g. calm, headspace or [Ten Percent Happier -free access for "Coronavirus Sanity"](#))
- Reach out to your physicians and mental health professionals, many are in the process of switching services to telehealth and may continue seeing you in high-need situations

Resources:

- [Managing social isolation and anxiety](#).

There have been reports of younger people without FND or chronic medical conditions being severely affected. We remind all members to take necessary precautions and follow all local, state, and national government guidelines.