

# M.M.N. Patient's information sheet

**NATIONAL DATABASE CLINICAL WORKSHOP**  
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# Multifocal Motor Neuropathy

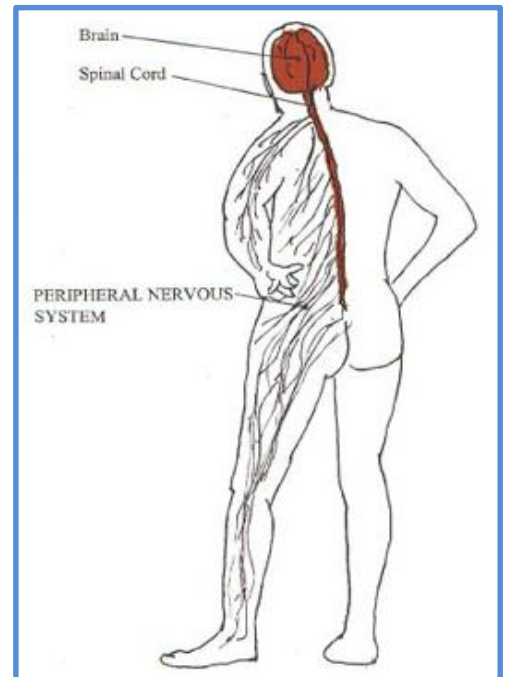
## What does this mean?

This is medical jargon, but it provides useful information about the disease. Taking each word in turn:

**Multifocal** means affecting more than one area.

**Motor** means that the nerves affected are specifically those that carry signals in the direction from the brain and spinal cord to the muscles.

**Neuropathy** means disease of the nerves.



## What is actually going on?

There is damage to the nerves connecting the brain and spinal cord to the muscles in the arms and legs. These nerves are the **peripheral nervous system** (see picture).

## What causes the damage to the nerves?

There is strong evidence that the problem lies with the **immune system** (the body's defence mechanism) acting against the coating of the peripheral nerves. The exact cause of this is not known. It is neither inherited from your parents, nor does it spread from one person to another.

## How does the nerve damage cause my symptoms?

This leads to malfunction of the nerves. This interferes with the signals going from the brain to the muscles causing **weakness** of the affected muscles.

## Is everyone affected the same?

No. Some people experience only minor symptoms. Others experience severely disabling symptoms. Most people fall somewhere between these two extremes.

## How will the disease affect me?

This also varies from person to person. Some people suffer relapses, where the disease keeps on returning after periods of stability. Other people have a single episode which resolves and does not return.

## Is there any treatment available?

There is treatment available. It focuses on 'dampening down' the body's immune system. This is based on the principle that the abnormality is with the body's immune system acting against the nerves. Physiotherapy and occupational therapy are also important parts of treatment for many people.

## What are the different treatments affecting the immune system?

The main treatment is immunoglobulin therapy, although immunosuppressant drugs are sometimes used. Any treatments will be discussed in detail before they are prescribed by your doctor.

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## How do the treatments work?

They suppress the immune system's activity against the nerves. This reduces the amount of inflammation in the nerves and reduces the nerve damage. Physiotherapy and occupational therapy maximise your physical potential, working on strength and function of the muscles.

## Can my nerves repair themselves after damage?

The protein coating around the nerve can repair over weeks to months once the inflammation has settled, and symptoms can gradually improve.

## Will the treatments cure me of MMN?

No. The treatment does suppress activity of the disease by dampening down inflammation of the nerves. We are treating the effects of the disease rather than the disease itself. Until more is known about what it is that causes the abnormal immune response against the nerves, this will remain the mainstay of treatment.

## Does everyone benefit the same from treatment?

The response to treatment varies widely between people. Treatment is tailored to individuals.

## What benefit will I get from treatment?

Treatment generally speeds up the rate of recovery and also helps to prevent further nerve damage. However, as well as the response to treatment varying from person to person, it can also vary in the same person throughout the course of the disease. Your treatment will be tailored according to your individual need.

## Is treatment safe?

On the whole the treatment options are safe. Serious side effects are not common. However, the treatments are given under supervision and you will be monitored for side effects.

## Do I need to have treatment?

Treatment is recommended in most cases and is tailored to each individual.

Without treatment, the nerve damage can improve. However, recovery can be very slow. The nerve damage can also become progressively worse or follow a relapsing-remitting course.