

Safe Use and Care of a Manual Wheelchair Including Elevating Leg Rest Option

Manual Wheelchairs can be used by people who find it difficult to mobilise at home or in the community.

Evidence shows that safety and independence can be improved by using assistive equipment, such as a manual wheelchair.



Handling/Back Care

- When assisting a person in a wheelchair, do not attempt to push a person up or down more than one step.
- Avoid bending the back and twisting movements when pushing a person in a wheelchair, or when adjusting the wheelchair.

Getting Into/Out of the Wheelchair

- Move the wheelchair as close as possible to the surface you are moving to e.g. bed.
- Apply the brakes prior to standing up or sitting down.
- It may be helpful to remove or lift the armrest if transferring from the side.
- Lift the footplates up or remove them if possible, so they don't get in the way.
- Do not stand on the footplates at any time.

Optional Accessories

Elevating leg rest

- Swings away for transfers.
- Set footplate shaft length by undoing the knob on the side of the leg rest to lower the footplate, tighten the knob to lock the footplate in the desired length.
- Set leg rest angle by using the catch system on the side of the leg rest.
- Repeat for all legs.

Pushing the Wheelchair

General Considerations

- Take care when moving through narrow doorways to ensure you do not hit your elbows or hands on the walls. Use the push-rims to propel the chair.
- Ensure feet are on the footplates during movement.
- Clothing, blankets, hands and fingers must be clear of the wheels at all times.
- Take care that the front wheels don't get caught in cracks or potholes.
- Always use lifts. Do not use travelators or escalators.
- Wheelchairs with elevating leg rests require greater turning circles.

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Self-propelling the Wheelchair:

The most common method of self-propelling a wheelchair is as follows:

- Sit well back in the wheelchair, leaning forward only when going up an incline.
- To move forwards or backwards, apply even pressure at the same time to the push-rims of each wheel.
- To turn left, push forwards on the right sided push-rim whilst holding the left wheel steady.
- To turn right, push forward on the left sided rim whilst holding right push-rim steady.
- For advice and practice on self-propelling up and down kerbs/steps or ramps/inclines see your Occupational Therapist.

Pushing Someone in the Wheelchair:

- Avoid pushing a person up an incline if you experience regular back pain. Consider alternative routes.
- When pushing a person down hill, hold the handgrips and descend slowly, in order to maintain control. If a ramp or hill is steep, it may be easier to proceed down, backwards.
- When pushing a wheelchair up a step: Face the wheelchair to the kerb, tip the chair onto its back wheels, move the wheelchair up to the kerb edge and place the castors onto the footpath. Then push the wheelchair onto the footpath.
- When moving a wheelchair down a step: It is simpler to go backwards down a step. Lower the rear wheels over the step. Place your foot on the tipping bar and lower the front castors of the wheelchair into an upright position.

Folding the Wheelchair

- To fold a wheelchair: Fold the footplate up or remove elevating leg rest before folding the chair. Hold the middle of the seat at the front and back and pull upwards.
- To unfold a wheelchair: Push down on both sides of the seat, keeping your fingers clear of the seat edges.

Lifting a Wheelchair into a Car

- Remove armrests and footplates and place them in the boot. Do not lift the wheelchair by the armrests.
- Fold the wheelchair and engage the brakes.
- Place the folded wheelchair parallel to the boot.
- Lift the wheelchair onto the edge of the boot, bending your legs and keeping your back straight.
- Lay the wheelchair flat in the boot.

Precautions

- Maximum user weight recommended is 100kg (~16 stone) unless otherwise stated. This depends on the model.
- Users over 100kg require bariatric equipment.
- When standing up or sitting down; always apply brakes. Check both brakes are engaged and secure.
- Do not stand or put full body weight onto footplates or elevating leg rests as the chair may tip.

Cleaning and Maintenance

- Store the wheelchair in a clean, dry place.
- Regularly check tyres and brakes. Use a bike pump or car pump to inflate the tyres if needed. Tyres should be firm when pressed (max pressure normally indicated on tyre wall).
- Wipe over the upholstery with a damp cloth and mild detergent.

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- Wipe chrome and painted surfaces.
- Promptly report any damage or malfunction to the Short Term Equipment Service for assistance.

Further Information

- If you should require a wheelchair permanently, contact your prescriber to discuss the available options.
- Contact your prescriber for further advice if you have any problem transferring on and off or using the wheelchair. Other items that may help you can also be discussed.

Your equipment has been issued to you by:

Please speak to your Occupational Therapist if you have any questions about using the wheelchair.

Your Occupational Therapist: _____

Phone: _____

Interpreter Services

Professional interpreters are available if you need help understanding or speaking English.

Interpreter services are free and confidential. You can ask for an interpreter if one is not offered to you. The staff will book the interpreter for you. If you need an interpreter so you can contact us, please call the telephone Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450.

Health Care Interpreter Service

A free and confidential interpreter service is available 24 hours, seven days a week. Ask the staff to arrange an interpreter for you if you would like this pamphlet translated.

This pamphlet has been developed to provide you with information regarding the purpose, safe use and installation of your prescribed equipment. This information serves only as a guide and must be used in conjunction with education from your Occupational Therapist.

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