

POWER WHEELCHAIRS



PURPOSE: Power wheelchairs are designed to provide mobility for those individuals that need assistance. They are manufactured with state-of-the-art electronics and battery technologies. Always read and abide by all manufacturers' operating instructions. If you have not seen a physician or therapist regarding your wheelchair, we encourage you to do so.

TYPES: Wheelchairs come in many different shapes, sizes, and brands. These wheelchairs can range from several thousand to tens of thousands of dollars. All wheelchairs have a maximum weight limit that they can support. Make sure you verify the weight capacity of your wheelchair. Wheelchairs also come in different height models and variations in weight. Many medical equipment providers also have the capability to custom build a power wheelchair to meet most needs. At all times the user must follow and abide by

all manufacturer's safety and operational procedures.

LEG RESTS: Leg rests come in three basic types, fixed, swing away and elevating. Fixed leg rests are for users that transport their wheelchair infrequently or have unlimited transportation space. Swing-away leg rests actually *swing away* and detach, thus allowing a more compact size to the wheelchair when transporting, and also making getting into and out of the wheelchair safer and more accessible. Elevating leg rests allow the raising of the leg to an extended position. This feature is provided for users that cannot bend or must raise their legs. All leg rests should be adjusted properly before using.

BATTERIES: Each power-operated vehicle must utilize batteries for its power source. All batteries contain sulfuric acid in some form and must be properly handled and maintained. With the exception of routine maintenance, your medical equipment provider recommends that you not install or work on the batteries. Your medical equipment provider will provide you with repair facilities and will assist you in proper maintenance.

USE: Each wheelchair is equipped with wheel locks. Wheel locks are not intended to keep the wheelchair braked in all situations. Wheel locks are designed to provide resistance so the average user will not move when they are applied. Wheel locks should be regularly checked and adjusted for proper function. When transferring into and out of the wheelchair, always have brakes applied.

All leg rests have flip-up footplates. These footplates must always be flipped up and out of the way when transferring into and out of the wheelchair. Most wheelchairs come with anti-tipping devices attached. These devices are designed to help prevent backward tipping of the wheelchair. These devices must always be in place.

LIFTS: Many medical equipment providers sell and install wheelchair lifts. These devices simplify the transportation of your wheelchair. Ask your medical equipment provider about the different models available to accommodate your needs.

CUSHIONS: Wheelchair cushions come in many different styles and levels of cushioning. Cushions are designed for those individuals who spend many hours in their wheelchairs and need to prevent skin breakdown. Cushions can provide support and stability for the user. Cushions should be purchased from a professional medical supplier that can properly fit the user. Most medical equipment providers maintain a modest selection of different cushions for different needs; some can even custom make a cushion for special needs.

SAFETY: Use extra caution for mobility risks and risks of falling, including:

- **Poor lighting:** Use of nightlights, flashlight by bedside, lamps or light switch that can be reached easily.
- **Poor walk spaces:** Fix loose floorboards, paint uneven floors, use wet floors signs, keep snow and ice cleared from entrances, ensure carpet is firmly attached to the stairs, do not walking in stocking feet, and remove loose rugs, clutter, cords, and excess oxygen tubing.
- **Equipment:** Replace worn or cracked walker, crutch, and cane tips, use colored oxygen tubing on light carpet, and tighten loose handrails.
- **Bathroom:** Install grab bars, use bath mats with suction cups, and use elevated toilet seat.
- **Medications:** Be aware of medications that may cause dizziness, drowsiness, and unsteadiness.

ACCESSORIES: Like any other transportation modality, wheelchairs can be purchased with many different options or accessories. Medical equipment providers can order and install most accessories, like wheelchair lap trays, oxygen holders, cushions, and power attachments.

MAINTENANCE: Power wheelchairs are very delicate vehicles and utilize state-of-the-art electronics and components. Power wheelchairs, like automobiles, must never be abused. Proper maintenance of your wheelchair will make for many years of enjoyable and safe driving. If you have pneumatic tires, check the air pressure monthly. Always replace worn or damaged tires. Never leave your power wheelchair outside in adverse weather conditions. Always store your power wheelchair in a dry place. See battery sheet for battery maintenance and charging.