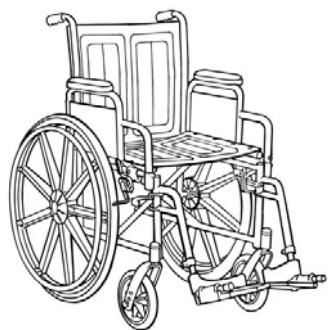


# MANUAL WHEELCHAIRS



**PURPOSE:** Wheelchairs are designed to allow those individuals who either cannot walk or have limited walking ability to be independent and mobile. Wheelchairs should be properly prescribed and fitted. 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 hundred to several 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. Most medical equipment providers also have the capability to custom build or order a manual wheelchair to meet most needs. At all times the user must follow and abide by all manufacturers' safety and operational procedures.

**ARMRESTS:** Armrests provide support for the user's arms. There are two types of armrests, fixed and detachable. The fixed type armrests usually provide a more secure fit to the user and generally result in a narrower chair. Detachable arms either lift out of the way or completely detach from the chair allowing for easy transferring into and out of the wheelchair. You should consult your medical product supplier for your specific needs.

**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 giving the wheelchair a more compact size 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.

**TRANSPORTATION:** Transportation of wheelchairs is simplified by their ability to fold up or collapse. A collapsed wheelchair is reduced to a width of approximately 1 foot. It can be easily rolled into a back seat of a car by tilting the wheelchair on its large wheels and placing the smaller caster wheels into the vehicle. Then roll the larger wheels up into the back seat. Storage in automobile trunks is also accessible. The user must always utilize proper lifting techniques when lifting heavy or awkward objects. There are also inexpensive wheelchair lifts that can be attached to most trailer hitches.

**USE:** To fold up your wheelchair, grab the seat sling in the middle and pull up. To unfold, push down on the seat guideposts with the palm of your hand. Never allow your fingers to get between the guideposts and armrests. To prevent tire damage, never store or transport your wheelchair with the wheel locks on.

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 that 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:** Medical equipment providers are dedicated to complete customer care and want to service your entire wheelchair needs. The user should perform visual checks on their wheelchair at least monthly. If any item is ripped or worn, it should be replaced immediately. If any item needs adjusting, it should be done immediately by contacting your medical equipment provider.