

Safe use of a wheelchair

Last updated September 2013

Getting into a wheelchair

1. Make sure that both of the brakes are in place and the front casters face forward.
2. Fold up both footplates and swing them to the sides or up, depending on the chair model, out of your way.
3. If possible, have someone hold the handles of the wheelchair so that it will not move.
4. With both hands on the front of the armrests, lower yourself onto the seat.
5. Swing the footrests to the front and/or fold down the footplates. Place your feet on the footplates, with your heels resting towards the back of the foot plate.

Getting up from a wheelchair

1. Back the wheelchair so that the front casters face forward.
2. Make sure that both the brakes are in place.
3. Fold up both footplates and swing them to the sides or up, depending on the chair model, out of your way.
4. If possible, have someone to hold the handles of the wheelchair so that it will not move.
5. Move forwards on the seat.
6. Place both feet firmly on the ground, slightly apart and with one foot further back.
7. Place both hands on the front of the armrests, lean forwards with your head and shoulders over your knees to give balance, and then push yourself up.

Transferring sideways from your wheelchair

Place your wheelchair alongside the chair, bed, or toilet to which you wish to transfer.

1. Back the wheelchair so that the front casters face forward.
2. Make sure that both the brakes are in place.
3. Fold up both footplates and/or swing them up to the sides out of the way.
4. If possible, have someone to hold the handles of the wheelchair so that it will not move.
5. Remove the armrest on the side from which you are transferring.
6. Place one hand on the armrest and the other, palm down, on the surface to which you are transferring.
7. Move forwards on the wheel chair seat, lean slightly forwards, push up and slide across to the other surface.

Negotiating curbs

Whenever possible, it is best to avoid curbs. Always try to use ramps or curb cuts on sidewalks. If you wish to negotiate curbs without help, do not do so until you have had proper instruction. Ask your therapist, wheelchair provider, or an experienced wheelchair user for help.

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