

Your Wheelchair: Care, Maintenance, Mobility, and Health

Service Provider Information

We hope your new wheelchair will provide you with the comfort, support, freedom, and mobility to participate in and enjoy life more. This guide provides information on how to care for your health and your wheelchair and how to use your wheelchair. It should help you remember the training you received from your service provider.

We hope this guide will answer any questions you have. If not, please contact your service provider.

Your name: _____

Service provider: _____

Address: _____

Telephone number: _____

Email address: _____

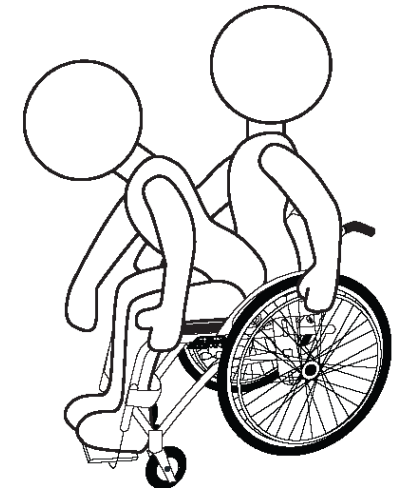
You have an appointment with the service provider at:

(Date, time, location)

Taking Care of Your Health

Pressure Relief Technique—Bending Forward

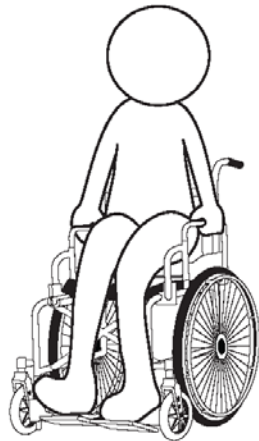
- For at least 15 seconds every 30 minutes, lean forward in the wheelchair so the sit bones have no pressure on them.
- If needed for safety, an assistant can stand in front of you while you lean forward to relieve pressure on the back or sit bones.
- You may need assistance going down or getting up from this position.
- Caution: This maneuver may cause dizziness in users with blood pressure problems.



Taking Care of Your Health

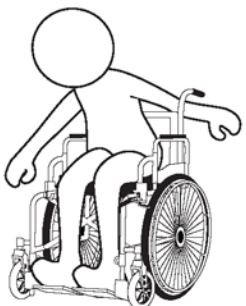
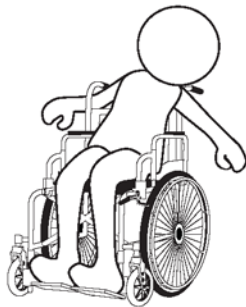
Pressure Relief Technique—Push Up

- For at least 15 seconds every 30 minutes, push up on the armrest so that the sitting surface has no pressure on it.
- You need to have sufficient upper body strength to use this technique.



Pressure Relief Technique—Leaning Side to Side

- For at least 15 seconds every 30 minutes, lean to each side.
- A user with good trunk control can lean without holding onto the wheelchair; it is important that the sit bones have no pressure on them.
- A user with poor trunk control (for instance, with a high-level spinal cord injury) can hook an arm behind the push handle for stability.



Maintenance Instructions

Routine maintenance can:

- Prevent breakdowns and excessive wear, making your wheelchair last longer, go farther, and cost less to repair.
- Prevent injuries or *unnecessary* strain to your muscles *by making your wheelchair easier to propel*.
- Make your wheelchair more comfortable and easier to use.

		What to do
Daily	Tires (pneumatic)	<input type="checkbox"/> Check air pressure. <input type="checkbox"/> Add air as needed. <input type="checkbox"/> Fix any punctures immediately.
	Wheelchair and cushion	<input type="checkbox"/> Check for cleanliness. <input type="checkbox"/> Clean and dry the wheelchair or the cushion when it is dirty or wet. <input type="checkbox"/> Do not dry the cushion in direct sunlight. <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure the cushion is completely dry before placing it back in the wheelchair.
Monthly	Routine inspection	<input type="checkbox"/> Cushion— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Check the cover for rips, tears, and wear (repair or replace as needed). <input type="checkbox"/> Check foam for wear (replace as needed). <input type="checkbox"/> Upholstery—check for rips, tears, and wear in fabric and seams (repair as needed).

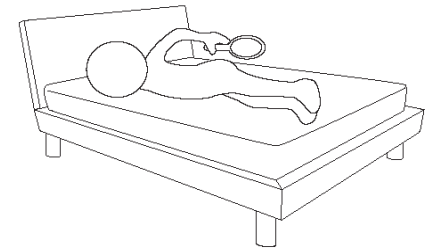
Maintenance Instructions

		What to do
Monthly	Routine inspection (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Rear wheels— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure they run smoothly (if not, clean, lubricate, or replace the bearings). <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure the spokes are tight (adjust as needed so the wheel runs true). <input type="checkbox"/> Look for wear or cracks (replace as needed). <input type="checkbox"/> Wheel locks (brakes)—make sure they properly engage and stop the rear wheels (adjust as needed). <input type="checkbox"/> Hand (push) rims—make sure they are secured to the rear wheels. <input type="checkbox"/> Rear axle—make sure it is attached to the frame so there is no “play” between the frame and rear wheel (adjust as needed). <input type="checkbox"/> Front (castor) wheels— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure they run smoothly (if not, clean, lubricate, or replace the bearings). <input type="checkbox"/> Look for wear or cracks (replace as needed). <input type="checkbox"/> Armrests—make sure the pad is secure and in good condition (replace as needed). <input type="checkbox"/> Footrests—make sure they are secured to the frame and properly adjusted (adjust as needed).

Taking Care of Your Health

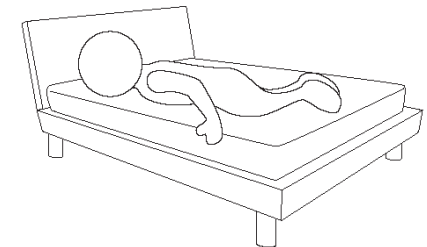
How to Check for Pressure Sores

- Check daily either before getting out of bed in the morning or before going to sleep at night.
- Use a mirror to check areas that are difficult to see.
- If needed, have an assistant check for pressure sores.



Taking Breaks from Sitting

- A rest break during the day may help to prevent pressure sores that can develop with long-term sitting.
- Lying on your stomach is a great way to take pressure off and provide a good general stretch to muscles, joints, and ligaments.



Taking Care of Your Health

Keep in mind that:

- A pressure sore can develop on any part of your body that touches the wheelchair within a very short time.
- All wheelchair users are at risk of developing a pressure sore.
- It is MUCH easier to prevent a pressure sore than to treat one.
- Pressure sores can develop very quickly and be life-threatening.
- Special at-risk areas include any bony area close to the skin.

Pressure sores can be prevented by:

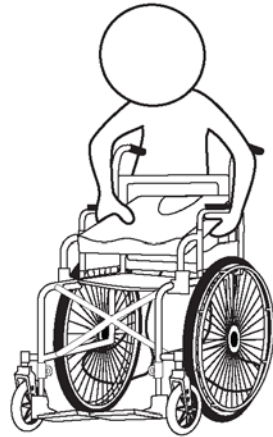
- Using pressure relief techniques.
- Use of a good cushion (pressure relief techniques should be used no matter how good the cushion is).
- Keeping the cushion clean and dry.
- Good posture.
- Changing positions regularly.
- Checking your skin regularly.
- Good hydration and nutrition.

Maintenance Instructions

		What to do
Monthly	Routine inspection (continued)	<input type="checkbox"/> Frame—check the welds and cross brace. Look for rust, cracks, and sharp edges on the frame. <input type="checkbox"/> Seek repairs as needed.
	Cleaning	<input type="checkbox"/> Clean the wheelchair and cushion using water and mild soap. <input type="checkbox"/> Dry the wheelchair and cushion. <input type="checkbox"/> Do not dry the cushion in direct sunlight. <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure the cushion is completely dry before placing it back in the wheelchair.
	Oil moving parts	Recommended oil for basic maintenance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Heavier oil is better. <input type="checkbox"/> The best oil to use is 90 or 140 weight gear oil. <input type="checkbox"/> The next best is 20 weight electric motor oil. <p>Do not use: automotive engine oil, common penetrating household lubricants and degreasers (like WD-40), or light sewing machine or household oils.</p> <p>Do not oil sealed bearings.</p> <p>Common parts to oil include the wheel lock, cross brace, and folding footplate.</p>
	Tighten nuts and bolts (if loose)	Wheel axles, push rims, wheel locks, armrests, footrests, frame, and other parts

Cushion Care and Maintenance

- Place the cushion on the seat so the “well,” or depression, is at the back.
- Make sure there are no objects (such as keys) on the cushion.
- Immediately wash the cover (and the cushion, if needed) if they become dirty or wet with urine.
- Wipe the cushion down with a clean wet cloth for minor dirt or stains, or wash it with soap and water according to the instructions provided with the cushion or by your service provider.
- Dry the cushion.
- Do Not** dry the cushion in the sun, as the sun will cause the cushion to wear faster.
- Make sure the cushion is completely dry before placing it back in the wheelchair.



Taking Care of Your Health

Although your new wheelchair has been specifically fitted to you, you need to take care of yourself. This includes doing frequent pressure relief and, when possible, moving out of the wheelchair to other positions during the day.

Monitor Your Skin Regularly – Each Day – and After Prolonged Sitting in Any Position

If your skin is its normal color, then continue with your current pressure relief techniques and schedule.

If your skin is red or darker in a spot, then keep pressure off the spot until the color returns to normal.

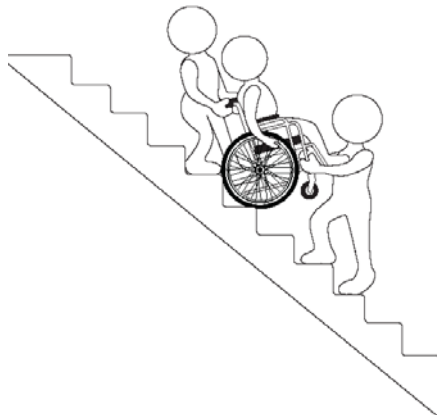
If the skin has a blister or a wound, see a doctor immediately!



Moving the Wheelchair

Stairs—Up or Down

- This requires at least two assistants for multiple stairs—one assistant may be able to handle one or two steps. Make sure there is enough help for the situation.



Going up Stairs

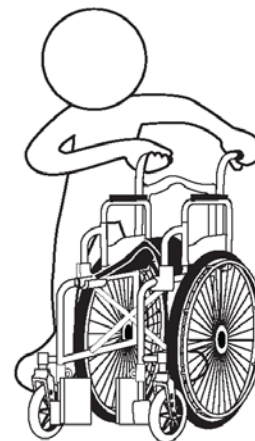
- Position the wheelchair with the rear wheels against the bottom step.
- The rear assistant tilts the wheelchair back.
- The front assistant holds the front of the wheelchair frame—NOT the footrests or the user.
- On the count of three (the user or one of the assistants should be designated to count), the rear assistant pulls up and back, the front assistant pushes up and back, and the user helps as much as possible with his or her hands on the push rims.
- Repeat this process, making sure to steady the wheelchair on each step.

Going down Stairs

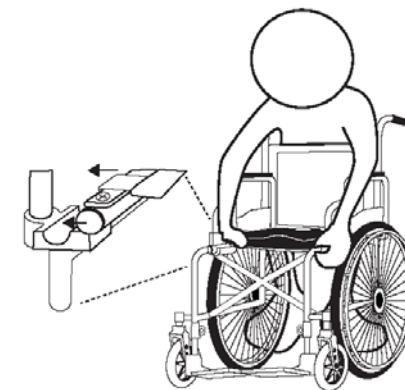
- Position the wheelchair with the front wheels close to the top step.
- The rear assistant tilts the wheelchair back.
- On the count of three, the rear assistant pushes the wheelchair forward, and both assistants hold tightly so the wheelchair goes down one step at a time.
- Repeat this process, making sure to steady the wheelchair on each step.

Folding and Unfolding the Wheelchair

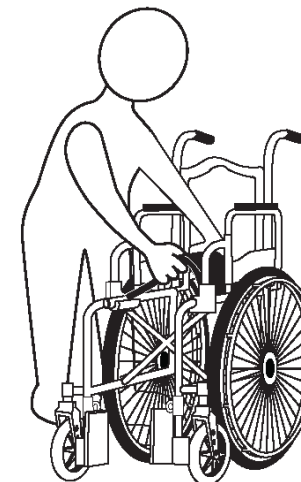
Wheelchair with folding frame (cross or x-brace)



- Unfolding the wheelchair



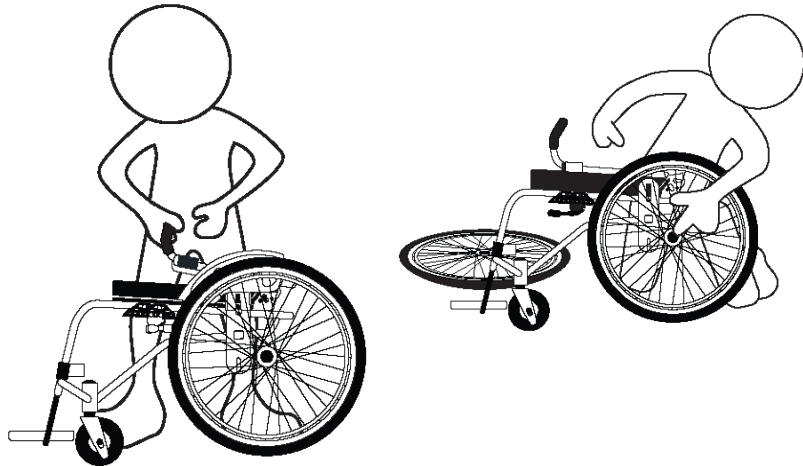
- Locking in place



- Folding the wheelchair

Folding and Unfolding the Wheelchair

Wheelchair with rigid frame



- Pull on the string located at the back and bottom of the seat back to release the seat back and fold it down.
- Remove the rear wheels by pushing in on the quick-release axle and pulling the wheel out.



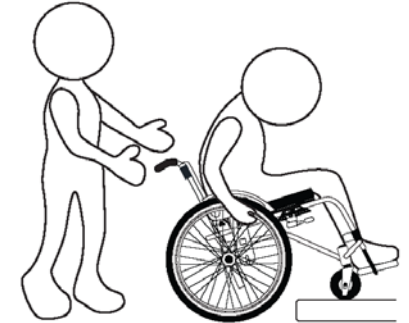
- To reassemble the wheelchair:**
 - Install each rear wheel by pushing in on the quick-release axle and inserting it into the axle receiver.
 - Fold the back up until it “locks” into place.
 - Install the side guards.

- Pull up to remove the side guards.

Moving the Wheelchair

Moving over a Curb (Independently)

- Using a modified wheelie will help you move up a curb.
- Face the curb squarely and move slowly.
- Slightly lean forward in the wheelchair.
- Grasp the push rim and pull back quickly.
- Practice with someone behind you until the skill is mastered.



Moving over a Curb (with Assistance)

- The assistant stands on the curb.
- The assistant firmly grasps the push handles and tips the wheelchair back to the balance point.
- The user leans back and, if able, pulls back on the push rims.
- The assistant rolls the wheelchair up the curb.



Moving the Wheelchair

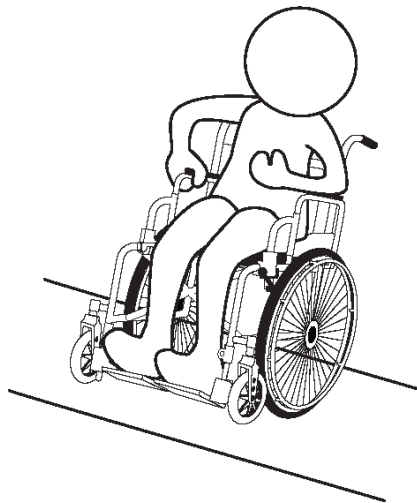
Traveling down Slopes

- For gentle slopes, the user leans back with his or her hands on the push rims, increasing pressure if needed to slow speed.
- For steep slopes, an assistant should walk behind the user, ready to assist.
- For steeper slopes, traveling back and forth at angles will slow the wheelchair down and help maintain control.
- Caution should be taken at the bottom of the slope so that the footrests do not catch on level ground.



Rest Position

- When going up or down a slope, you can stop and rest by turning the wheelchair sideways so that the wheels are perpendicular to the slope.



Transfers

- It is ideal to move around to different sitting surfaces during the day, as much as possible.
- Think through your transfer before you physically do the transfer.
- For every transfer, follow the principles below so that transfers are safe for both the wheelchair user and any assistant(s).
 - Move the wheelchair close to the transfer surface.
 - Make sure the wheelchair's wheel locks (brakes) are ON every time and that the surface you are transferring to is stable and secure.
 - Do not put your hand on the wheel lock (brake) when transferring in or out of the wheelchair.
 - Do not put your hand on the footrest during transfers—especially if it is a removable footrest.
 - Do not stand on or carry loads on the footrests.
 - If possible, move the footrests and armrests out of the way when transferring.
 - For assisted transfers, the user should do as much as possible to move; this may include moving hips forward in the wheelchair, leaning forward, and using arms and legs to push up from sitting.
 - For assisted transfers, good communication is needed so that everyone is ready for the transfer, and their actions are coordinated.
- The following three pages show the types of transfers:
 - Independent standing
 - Independent non-standing with legs up
 - Independent non-standing with legs down
 - Assisted standing
 - Assisted non-standing

Independent Standing Transfer

- Move forward in the wheelchair.
- Use your arms for assistance and balance.
- If your legs are not able to support your weight, either get assistance or use one of the independent non-standing transfers.



Independent Non-standing Transfer with Legs Up

- The wheelchair should be at an angle and close to the transfer surface.
- Move forward in the wheelchair.
- Lift your feet onto the transfer surface.
- Use your arms to transfer.



Moving the Wheelchair

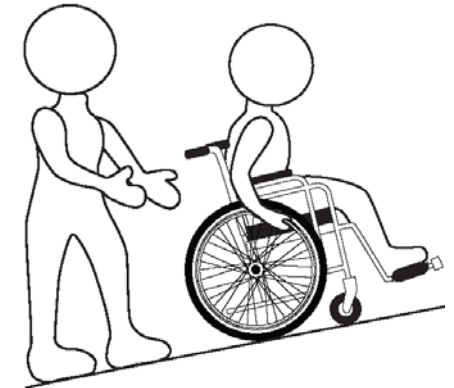
Being Pushed over Rough Terrain

- The assistant firmly grasps the push handles and tilts the wheelchair back to the balance point.
- The assistant pushes from the push handles, and the user, if able, pushes using the push rims.



Traveling up Slopes

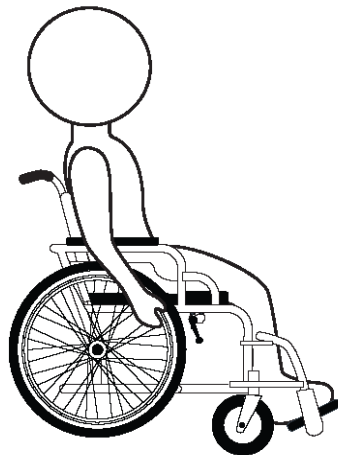
- For gentle slopes, the user leans forward and pushes using the push rims.
- If the slope may be too steep, an assistant should walk behind the user, ready to assist.
- For steep slopes, pushing at an angle can help the user move uphill and still be able to rest if necessary.



Moving the Wheelchair

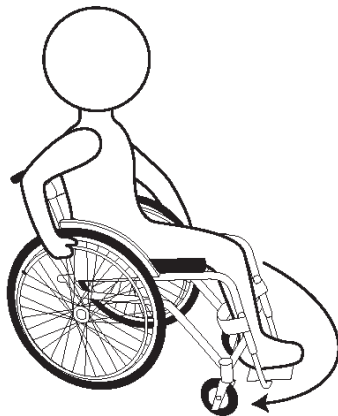
Stopping

- Lean back in the wheelchair.
- To slow down, tighten your grip on the push rim at about the 2:00 position.
- Be careful not to stop too fast, as the wheelchair may tip forward.



Turning

- Push forward with one hand while the other hand is pulling backward.



Independent Non-standing Transfer with Legs Down

- The wheelchair should be at an angle and close to the transfer surface.
- Move forward in the wheelchair.
- Use your arms to transfer.



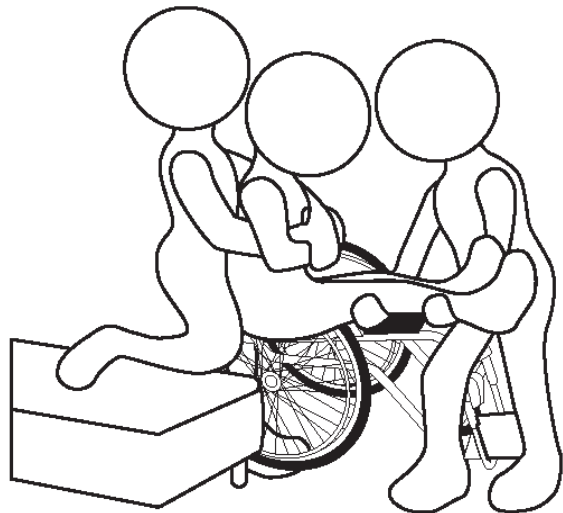
Assisted Standing Transfer

- Move the wheelchair close to the transfer surface.
- The user should be moved forward in the wheelchair, close to the end of the seat or cushion.
- The assistant uses his or her knees to keep the user's legs from buckling, moving, or bending.
- The assistant puts his or her arms around the user's lower back or hips.
- The user can place his or her hands around the waist of the assistant—but never around the neck of the assistant.
- The assistant leans the user forward and then, while keeping his or her own back straight, uses leg strength to help the user stand on the count of three.
- A second assistant may be needed during the transfer and should stand behind the user.



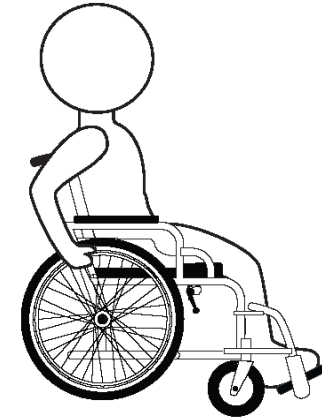
Assisted Non-standing Transfer

- Move the wheelchair close to the transfer surface.
- The assistant transferring the user's body stands behind the user, placing one foot on the floor and the other knee on the transfer surface.
- The assistant reaches under the user's arms and holds onto the user's folded forearms, holding them against the user's chest.
- A second assistant will move the user's legs using good body mechanics, with a straight back and bent knees.
- On the count of three, the assistants transfer the user.
- Assistants may only be able to move the user part of the way and then can reposition themselves before repeating, as needed.
- If moving partway and readjusting, plan where the intermediate stopping point will be.



Moving the Wheelchair

- Place your hands so that you can push the rim between the pad of the thumb and the curled fingers.
- It is often helpful to wear gloves with the fingertips removed to keep your hands clean and to provide better traction.



Moving Forward

- Get into pushing position by bending your head and body slightly forward.
- Push with your hands on the top of the push rim—don't wrap your fingers around the push rim.
- Push forward and then let your arms swing back. Think of a clock and move your hands from a 10:00 position to a 2:00 position.

