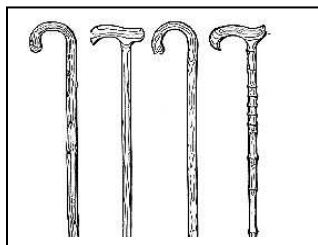


Walking Aids and Wheelchairs Outside



WALKING STICKS

Metal adjustable walking sticks can be long lasting and tend to bend rather than break. Timber sticks can be more shock absorbing, especially for those walking longer distances or users who put a lot of weight through a walking stick.

Taller “bush sticks” up to chest height may be more useful for people going down very steep ground.

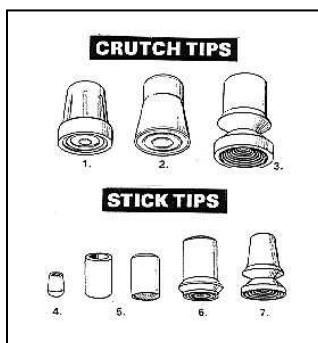
CRUTCH AND STICK TIPS

Replacement crutch and walking stick tips are available in different densities, sizes and shapes.

- Faun coloured tips are softest and may wear out quickly. Grey tips are harder but still have some give. Black tips are very hard and long lasting but can leave marks on floors. They may be best for users who wear out other tips frequently.

- Measure the shaft diameter of the stick or the inside diameter of the old tip to help determine what size(s) of tips will fit.

- “Sherpa” tips allow the tip to flex providing better contact with sloping or slippery ground.
 - Bowlers stick tips or tips that provide a wide “footprint” may be useful for sandy or soft soils.



FOUR WHEELED WALKERS

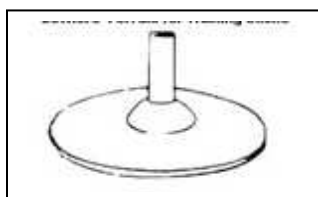
These walkers, often incorporate a seat for resting and a basket for carrying small objects. Many types are available with various brake designs and wheel options. Heavier frames with firm handgrips tend to last longer than light frames with foam handgrips.

Brakes:

- Hand operated cable brakes allow users to control their speed on steep descents.
- Cable brakes can be adjusted and worn brake shoes can be replaced by someone with basic mechanical skills.
- Push down stopper brakes tend to be better suited to walking on level paved areas rather than unpaved outdoor areas.

Wheels:

- Avoid wheels with very flat narrow tyres and choose wheels no smaller than 150mm/6” diameter.
- 200mm/8” wheels are less common but roll over high obstacles with less effort.
- Pump up tyres may be better over rough ground but can be punctured easily – see puncture proofing under wheelchairs.



LifeTec Queensland

BRISBANE
 Level One, Reading Newmarket
 Cnr Newmarket & Enoggera Roads
 (PO Box 3241), Newmarket Qld 4051
 Phone: 07 3552 9000 or 1300 885 886
 Facsimile: 07 3552 9088

Email: mail@lifetec.org.au
www.lifetec.org.au
 Independent Living Centre
 Association of Queensland
 Incorporated trading as LifeTec
 Queensland ABN 25 773 960 273

TOWNSVILLE
 Shop G-3A, Domain Central
 103 Duckworth Street
 (PO Box 8280), Garbutt, Townsville Qld 4814
 Phone: 07 4759 5600
 Facsimile: 07 4759 5688





WHEELCHAIRS

Wheelchairs may have a folding or rigid frame. Some wheelchair users prefer folding wheelchairs as they have flex/side play in the frame. They report that folding chairs require less effort to propel and push out of hollows and that they feel more stable with all four wheels in contact on uneven ground.

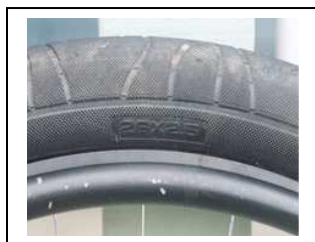
Rigid frame wheelchairs are strong and better suited to users who are very active outdoors; people who “wheelie” and drop off kerbs or steps balanced on the back wheels, or those who are fast and hard on the chair outdoors.

It is more difficult to keep all four wheels in contact with uneven ground. The user must shift their weight, leaning or rocking the chair to push out of dips or soft spots. Setting rear wheels to a more tippy balance position also significantly reduces the effort to push over rough terrain.



REAR WHEEL TYRES:

- Pump up tyres give a better grip on uneven or loose ground.
- Solid MCP (micro cellular polyurethane) tyres have become much more popular since they became available in softer compounds. Standard 24” x 1 3/8” rear wheelchair tyre sizes are available from most wheelchair suppliers and repairers.
- Standard 24” x 2.125” BMX tyres cannot be fitted to standard wheelchair rims. If converting from standard 24” x 1 3/8” tyres to BMX tyres wider than 1.85” it is usually necessary to change to rear wheels with wider rims.



Castors

- Solid castors have become much more standard with many users preferring not to maintain small pump up castor tyres. Castors are available in sizes from 75mm roller blades up to 200 x 50mm castors (more common on powered wheelchairs).
- Pump up castors take less effort to push over bumps. They also provide a softer ride which may be required to avoid triggering spasm or causing pain.
- It is advisable to trial larger size castors before ordering as they tend to reduce manoeuvrability and may hit the users feet.



Puncture Proofing

- Foam tubes can be inserted into pump up tyres to replace the air filled tube entirely. Referred to as solid inserts, the foam prevents punctures and gives a slightly softer ride than solid tyres.
- Tyre liners are tough plastic strips that are fitted between the tube and tyre. Slime liner or Mr Tuffy brands of liners can be ordered from bike shops and can significantly reduce punctures from thorns, burrs, glass and other sharp objects.
- Liquid puncture proofing compounds can be squirted into the tube and are intended to fill and plug the hole when punctured.



OUTDOOR AND BEACH WHEELCHAIRS

3 wheeler designs are uncommon but it may be easier to keep all 3 wheels in contact with the ground. They can also be pushed down steeper slopes without having to tip the chair and balance on the back wheels. Beach wheelchairs with low pressure air filled balloon tyres are easiest to push on soft sand. They can be challenging to dismantle and transport through and will float once in water 30cm or deeper.

NEED TO KNOW MORE?

Telephone, fax or e-mail your enquiry to obtain further information from one of the therapists about products. Alternatively, you can make an appointment to trial the equipment at our display centres or through our outreach service. Please phone LifeTec for further details.
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