

Powered Wheelchair Selection

Powered wheelchairs are used by a range of people with impaired mobility. Selection and use of a suitable powered wheelchair can significantly improve independence and quality of life for the individual. This fact sheet discusses common features for consideration when selecting a powered wheelchair. It is recommended that advice is sought from an Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist regarding the most suitable powered wheelchair for a particular individual.



MID VERSES REAR WHEEL DRIVE

Mid wheel drives tend to have a tighter turning circle and may be better in tight spaces. The front wheels and flip up footplates of mid wheel drives may impede standing transfers for some individuals. Newer mid wheel drives may have six wheels in contact with the ground. This has helped reduce the rocking that may have been experienced with older chairs when travelling over uneven ground.

Rear wheel drive chairs may be easier to transfer into or out of if the individual is able to stand as the front wheels do not extend in front of the seat frame and the leg rests can be removed.

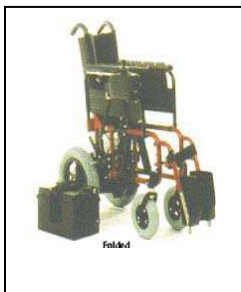


FRAME

Smaller more basic wheelchairs are available with folding frames which may be useful for storage or transportation. It should be noted that when disassembled the component parts are still very heavy i.e. up to 20 or 30kg.

CONTROLS

A range of different controls are available to meet a person's unique needs. These may include a standard joystick control, touch pad, sip and puff, head control, foot control, attendant controls and a variety of other switch controls. Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists can assist in identifying the most appropriate control device for an individual.



SEATING

Powered wheelchairs may have a slung seat and backrest or a solid seating system. Seating can also be customised for those with complex postural support needs.

ARMRESTS

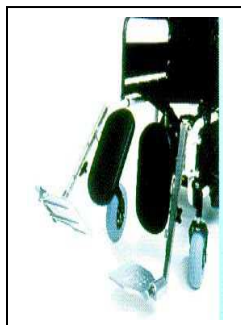
Armrests may be drop down, height adjustable, removable or flip back. Some are width adjustable. Desk length armrest will enable closer access to tables.

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LEG RESTS/FOOTPLATE

Leg rest options may include fixed, swing away detachable, or elevating. Footplates may be one piece flip up or separate flip up and height adjustable.

BRAKES

Brakes tend to be electromagnetic. This means that they engage when the control is released. Most chairs also have an additional manual parking brake.

BATTERIES/CHARGING

Most powered wheelchairs these days have gel cell batteries. Batteries are rated in amp hours and this will, in combination with the efficiency of the motor determine the distance the wheelchair can travel constantly before requiring recharging.

Powered wheelchairs may have off or on board chargers. The advantage of an off board charger is that it can be replaced easily if lost. The advantage of an on board charger is that you do not have to remember it when travelling. Suppliers recommend that powered wheelchairs are kept continually charged to maintain the life of the batteries.



Powered wheelchairs vary in regards to their suspension. This may affect the comfort of the ride and therefore may be an important consideration for people who experience spasms or increase pain with bumpy rides.

REGISTRATION

Powered wheelchairs must be registered in Queensland, which is free. Under Queensland Transport rules, the powered wheelchair must not travel at speeds greater than 10km per hour. Please speak with Queensland Transport for details and the appropriate forms. Powered wheelchair users must adhere to the Australian Road Rules for pedestrians.

INSURANCE

Registration with Queensland Transport provides free Compulsory Third Party Insurance. Other insurance policies that the powered wheelchair user may wish to consider include: Public Liability, House and Contents, Personal Effect Policies, and Personal Accident Policies.

SPECIALISED FEATURES

Some powered wheelchairs have the option of powered tilt in space, backrest recline, seat elevation and leg rest elevation. Some or all of these features may be required to meet a person's positioning needs.

FUNDING

Part funding may be available to eligible individuals through the Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme, Department of Veteran's Affairs or other individual funding packages. Speak to your therapist regarding possible options.

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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