

Scooter Selection

Powered scooters are a popular way for the elderly or other individuals with reduced mobility to access the local community. There are a large number of scooters on the market and selecting the most appropriate scooter can be difficult and confusing. This fact sheet discusses some of the common styles and features to consider when selecting a scooter.

THREE WHEEL VS FOUR WHEEL SELECTION

Three wheeled scooters are generally more manoeuvrable in confined spaces and have a tighter turning circle. They may also have additional room for the legs if the foot platform extends either side of the front wheel.

Four wheeled scooters may be more stable and may perform better over uneven terrain.

Controls:

Most scooters are operated by finger or thumb controls. Some scooters have a straight handle bar and others have a curved or delta bar. The delta bar enables both finger and thumb operation. The control panel may include a horn, indicators and hazard lights, a speed control, battery level gauge and key ignition.

Frame:

The frame may include the battery, motor housing, tiller and floor. Frames may be made from a combination of materials and many frames can be dismantled for storage or transportation.

Often the tiller can be adjusted to provide more comfortable access to the controls and allow more room for larger users. The tiller may also be moved to increase ease of transfer.

Scooters often differ in the space they provide for foot support. Some scooters allow the user to put their feet beside the wheels or on top of the wheels. This may be a good option for people with longer legs or reduced ability to bend their knees. Some scooters also have anti-tip devices built into the frame.

Tyres:

The majority of scooters have pneumatic tyres. Some also have self sealing or puncture proof tyres. Larger wheels may be better for outside use as they provide better clearance and deal better with uneven terrain.

The breaks of most scooters are activated automatically when the accelerator is released. Some scooters also have a manual brake.



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Seating:

Seating may range from simple bucket seats to plush contoured seating. Many have a swivel seal that locks every 90 degrees to facilitate sit to stand transfers.

Some seats have a reclining backrest. Other seats may be adjusted in height or moved forward or backwards to improve access to the tiller or to provide greater legroom. The scooter seat may or may not also include armrests.

Motor:

Scooters differ in the size of their motor and the motor capacity. This will affect the performance and speed of the scooter. Please note by law, powered mobility devices are not permitted to travel faster than 10km/hr. Larger motors will be required for rough or hilly terrain.



Batteries/charging:

Batteries are rated in amp hours and this will, in combination with the efficiency of the motor, provide a guide as to the distance the scooter can travel before requiring recharging. Suppliers recommend that scooters are continually charged to maintain the life of the batteries.

Suspension:

Scooters often differ in the amount of suspension. This is an important consideration for individuals who are sensitive to bumps/jolts or who are using the scooter over uneven terrain.



Accessories:

There are a range of scooter accessories including: mirrors, walking aid/oxygen carriers, baskets, safety belts, weather canopies, flags and trailers.

Other Considerations:

Load Capacity: Scooters differ in their load capacity and therefore it is essential to consider this before selecting a scooter.

Registration: Scooter registration is compulsory in Queensland. Please speak with Queensland Transport for details and the appropriate forms. Scooters must travel on the footpath and comply with Australian road rules for pedestrians. Currently there may be different registration and insurance requirements for each state in Australia.

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

General Safety: When using the scooter please be mindful of avoiding hazards like cars exiting driveways, uneven footpaths etc. For more advice on scooter safety precautions talk to your Occupational Therapist.



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 Queensland for further details.

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