

Consumer information

Guidelines for the prescription of a seated wheelchair or mobility scooter for people with a traumatic brain injury or spinal cord injury

Your wheelchair

It takes time to find the right wheelchair to meet your needs. Prescribing a wheelchair or a scooter is a complex process. It is not just about finding the right size. Other things that matter are your day-to-day activities, where you live, where you go and your transport.

Your therapist (usually an occupational therapist or physiotherapist) will help you to find the right wheelchair or scooter. The *Guidelines for the prescription of a seated wheelchair or mobility scooter for people with a traumatic brain injury or spinal cord injury* provide advice on this.

How can you help?

Finding the right wheelchair

- Talk with your therapist about the things you do and the things you would like to do. You can then set some goals and make a plan together.
- Take time to think about your answers to the therapist's questions.
- Ask questions if you don't understand.
- Ask for an interpreter if you need one.
- Make sure you take enough time to try out your wheelchair or scooter. You might feel more confident if you have spent time using the wheelchair. If possible, try using the wheelchair in your home and other places that you will be going (such as work, shops, visiting friends and family). (*refer to sections 3-6 in the guidelines*)
- Think about what sort of transport you will be using and whether the wheelchair or scooter is right for this (e.g. car, taxi, bus, train, aeroplane). (*refer to section 12 in the guidelines*)
- Understand the possible effects of alcohol, drugs and some medications on how you operate your wheelchair or scooter safely. (*refer to section 7.9 in the guidelines*)
- Write down your questions so you can ask the same questions when you try different wheelchairs or scooters.
- Think about taking photos to remind yourself of the options you have tried.

- Ask your therapist about training. Training will improve your skills and help you use your wheelchair better. The guidelines have information on the sort of training that can be helpful. *(refer to section 11 in the guidelines)*
- Ask the therapist and the equipment salesperson about what needs to be done to look after your wheelchair or scooter. You need to know about routine maintenance that will make sure you get the best out of your wheelchair or scooter. You also need to know about wheelchair or scooter repairs and servicing – where to go and who will pay. *(refer to section 13 in the guidelines)*

If you need a new wheelchair or scooter:

- Talk to your therapist about what you have liked and not liked about your wheelchair or scooter.
- Try out the new wheelchair or scooter before you decide. Even if it is the same brand, there are differences between models that can affect how it will meet your needs.
- You might still need some more training.

When it is delivered

You and your therapist will need to talk about where to deliver your new wheelchair or scooter.

- Check everything works. Do not take delivery if there is a problem.
- Make sure you know how it works and how to use it.
- Ask about looking after it and the warranty.
- Write down any problems on the delivery docket.
- Discuss the plan for fixing any problems.
- Make sure that you get a copy of the instruction booklet and warranty.
- Make a plan for follow up.

Follow up

It is good if the therapist checks on you and your wheelchair or scooter after 3 months and then again in 12 months. This is in case the wheelchair or scooter needs to be changed or adjusted after you have used it for a while. This also helps to fix problems before the end of the warranty period.

For further copies

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