

Choosing a Wheelchair

A wheelchair can help people with mobility issues to continue to be active, and in many cases can provide a better quality of life. If you are choosing a wheelchair for yourself, a friend or loved one, here is some information that may be useful.

Things to Consider

Before you go searching for a wheelchair, you need to consider the needs of the person using the chair. For example, body size, mobility, posture and physical strength will all help to determine the most suitable wheelchair.

The user might be able to get in and out of the chair themselves, but you also need to think about the future needs of the person using the chair. Today's wheelchairs come with a wide range of features, such as removable armrests which allow the user to slide into a bed or a vehicle.

Do you have a hoist or other mobility equipment at home? Make sure your chosen wheelchair works with your other aids.

Comfort is obviously a key consideration. The user needs enough room to move within the seat and rotate their upper body, while having a chair which supports their posture.

What Type of Wheelchair?

There are two main types of wheelchairs: manual or powered. Manual wheelchairs can be either self-propelled or attendant-propelled (transit), while powered chairs use batteries and electric motors.

Self-propelled chairs have large rear wheels and rims so the user can push themselves along using their upper body strength. This means these chairs are slightly wider and heavier, which can make them difficult to fit into the boot of a car. However, most self-propelling chairs are foldable and fit into car boots with ease.

Attendant-propelled chairs have smaller wheels and need someone to push the chair using handles. With smaller rear wheels, they are lighter and easier to pack away. You can even fit an electric power pack to a manual wheelchair which can make it easier to get around.

Fully electric or powered wheelchairs are designed for people with limited physical strength or stamina, but don't rely on someone doing the pushing, which ensures the user has their independence. These chairs come in all shapes and sizes, from small, lighter models intended for indoor use to large machines designed primarily for outside use.

Please be aware that powered wheelchairs are much heavier than manual wheelchairs, so you need to think about how you will transport them.

Storage and Charging

One of the main things to remember about powered wheelchairs is that they need to be charged regularly. Most wheelchair batteries take up to 10 hours to charge, so you need to be able to store them somewhere where they can charge overnight.

Need Help?

For honest, practical advice on wheelchairs and other mobility aids, contact the friendly experts at Classic Mobility. Call 01992 552224, visit <http://classicmobility.org.uk> or email office@classicmobility.org.uk. Alternatively, pop into the Classic Mobility shop at 15 Church Street, Hertford, SG14 1EJ.