

# HANDLING A WHEELCHAIR



## FACT SHEET

Sometimes handling a wheelchair can be difficult and time consuming. So we have provided some helpful tips on the basic handling to make things a little easier thereby reducing the risk of injury.

### TO FOLD A WHEELCHAIR

If handles are provided at each side of the seat, use these to pull upwards otherwise fold your chair by holding the midpoint on the seat at the front and back, pull upwards.

### TO UNFOLD A WHEELCHAIR

Push down on both sides of the seat making sure you keep your fingers clear of the edges of the seat frame in case they get trapped.

### TO TILT A WHEELCHAIR BACK

Always warn the occupant of your intention. Using the tipping level located on the chair push down and under with your foot. At the same time pull back and down on the handgrips.

### TO ASSIST A PERSON IN A WHEELCHAIR UP A KERB

Face the front of the chair onto its back wheels, place the castors onto the pavement and then push the wheelchair up onto the pavement.

### TO ASSIST A PERSON IN A WHEELCHAIR DOWN A KERB

Face the kerb, tip the chair on to its back wheels and lower down taking care not to jolt the occupant.

### TO ASSIST A PERSON IN A WHEELCHAIR UP A FLIGHT OF STEPS

It is advisable to have one attendant at the back and one at the front of the wheelchair. The wheelchair is taken backwards up the stairs, tilted backwards and balanced on the rear wheels. The attendant at the back takes most of the load in pulling the wheelchair up the steps, with the assistance from the attendant at the front. It is important to maintain the wheelchair in good balance, and move only one step at a time.

### TO ASSIST A PERSON IN A WHEELCHAIR DOWN A FLIGHT OF STEPS

It is advisable to have one attendant at the back and one at the front of the wheelchair. The wheelchair is taken frontwards down the steps, tilted backwards, and balanced on the two rear wheels. The attendant at the front moves down one step. It is important to maintain the wheelchair in good balance and move only down one step at a time.

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## TO PUSH A WHEELCHAIR DOWNHILL

- ⦿ Sit well back in the wheelchair.
- ⦿ When standing up or sitting down always apply brakes.
- ⦿ When standing up or sitting down always have foot plates up.
- ⦿ Do not stand on the foot plates, as the chair will tip forward.
- ⦿ Keep the armrest securely in place in the correct position.
- ⦿ Ensure feet are secure on the foot plates and will not slip off.
- ⦿ Ensure hands, arms and fingers will not be injured or become entangled in wheel spokes.
- ⦿ Keep the weight of their body forward when propelling the chair up an incline.
- ⦿ Travel slowly – and safely – down inclines in order to maintain control of the wheelchair.
- ⦿ People with poor trunk control should wear a safety belt or harness.
- ⦿ Keep the chair clean, and well maintained.

## WHEN TRANSFERRING

- ⦿ Place the chair as close as possible to the side you are transferring to.
- ⦿ Try to reduce the distance and angle as much as possible.
- ⦿ Remove the leg rests and brake lever extensions.
- ⦿ Ensure the brakes are securely on before standing up, or transferring.
- ⦿ Remove the armrest on the side you are transferring to.

## TO LIFT A WHEELCHAIR INTO A CAR BOOT

- ⦿ Remove the armrests, footrests and wheels (if applicable) and place in boot. This reduces the weight and length of the chair.
- ⦿ Fold wheelchair and engage brakes.
- ⦿ Grasp fixed section of frame. Making sure use of back care principles, lift wheelchair. The chair can be rested on the lip of the boot before sliding it in.
- ⦿ Remember to keep your back straight and bend your knees.
- ⦿ Your legs may be used as pivots to raise the wheelchair.
- ⦿ Protect the axles of detachable wheels and avoid damaging the wheelchair when closing the boot.

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