

How to push a person in a wheelchair

Following these instructions will help you safely move someone onto a wheelchair and push them.



Safety Warning

- If the person has very limited mobility, is unsteady on their feet, or is on medication that affects their balance, do not attempt to assist them on your own.

Before you start

- Wheelchairs have a weight limit that must not be exceeded. Ask your nurse if you have any concerns.
- If the wheelchair needs to be unfolded, do this by pulling apart the armrests and pushing downwards on the centre of the seat. You may need to re-attach the foot plates on the side pins.
- Lifting a wheelchair incorrectly can injure your back. Speak with your nurse about how to lift it safely if required.
- Make sure that the wheelchair is in good working order, with adequate tyre pressure. If the tyre pressure is low, the breaks will not work properly.
- Wheelchairs should be as comfortable as possible for the user and suitable for their function and environment. Some people may require a cushion.
- Make sure that you and the person to be pushed in the wheelchair are wearing shoes that are properly fitted and will not slip on the floor.



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Further information

Contact your nurse or health professional if you need further assistance.
www.caresearch.com.au

www.lmrpcc.org.au

Helping someone into a wheelchair

- 1 Let the person know what you will be doing before each step.
- 2 Put the wheelchair as close as possible to one side of the person.
- 3 Securely apply the brakes of the wheelchair and raise or remove the wheelchair footrests.
- 4 Help the person to move towards the wheelchair, swivelling around so the back of their legs touch the edge of the chair.
- 5 Have the person put their hands firmly on the arm rests of the wheelchair before slowly lowering themselves onto the chair.
- 6 Gently support them by placing your hand at their back and holding onto any belt. Otherwise, take one of their hands in your hand and their elbow in your other hand.
Note: never let the person you are assisting hold or hug you around your neck.
- 7 Lower footrests into place or re-attach them.
- 8 Help the person to position their feet securely on the footrests.

Tips for pushing safely

- Plan your route by considering potential obstacles. Is it possible to avoid narrow doors and corridors, steps, low branches, slippery floors and steep footpaths?
- When pushing, be close to the wheelchair, have a straight back and push with your whole body-weight and leg muscles. Keep your arms near your body and your elbows bent.
- When stopped, ensure that the brakes are on at all times.
- To fully apply brakes: push them until they 'click' on.



Bend forward at your waist and slowly lower onto the chair.



Feel the front of chair at the back of your knees and grab onto the armrests evenly with each hand.



Place feet firmly on the footrests.

Pushing the wheelchair up onto a footpath or kerb

- 1 Look for a ramp, driveway or other alternative.
If there is no option stand close to chair at the back, firmly holding the handles.
- 2 Face the wheelchair as close as possible to kerb.
- 3 Put your foot on the tipping or tilt bar (the lower horizontal bar between the back wheels).
- 4 Tip the chair back using the tipping bar until balanced on rear wheels.
- 5 Ensure you keep your back straight using your arm and leg muscles to balance chair.
- 6 Push steadily and firmly forward until the front wheels are on the pavement and the back wheels ride up.
- 7 Roll the wheelchair up kerb.
- 8 Never attempt to lift the rear wheels off the ground.

Pushing the wheelchair down a footpath or kerb

- 1 Reverse the wheelchair to edge of kerb.
- 2 Carefully step down from the kerb onto the road (or lower surface) while holding onto the chair.
- 3 Let the person know that the chair will dip and roll down.
- 4 Gently lower the wheels, rolling slowly down the kerb, making sure that both rear wheels hit the ground together.
- 5 Use the tipping bars (lower horizontal bar between the back wheels) to raise the front wheels and roll the wheelchair back on its rear wheels.
- 6 Ensure you keep your back straight using your arm and leg muscles to tip chair.
- 7 Move backwards until the front wheels clear the kerb and gently lower down onto the road.



Face the wheelchair towards kerb.



Tip chair back using tipping bar and balance on rear wheels.



Move slowly forward and lower front wheels onto the footpath.



Push steadily and firmly forward so back wheels ride up. Do not lift chair.

Loddon Mallee Regional Palliative Care Consortium

This information has been designed as a guide only and must not be relied on as an alternative to medical advice from a doctor or other healthcare professional. If you have questions about any medical matter you should consult your doctor or other healthcare professional as soon as possible. All persons involved in producing this document will not be held responsible for any adverse event arising from the use of all or part of this information.

Pushing the wheelchair down a slope

- 1 Check for any obstacles before moving.
- 2 If the slope is very steep, find someone to assist you.
- 3 Go down backwards slowly using your leg muscles and body weight to slow the chair down.
- 4 Try not to twist to look behind you whilst moving.

Folding the wheelchair up again

- 1 To fold the wheelchair, sharply pull up the seat of the wheel chair in the centre. On some wheelchairs the wheels can be detached by pushing on the wheel-releasing button in the centre of the wheel.
- 2 Flip up the footrests and swing away.
- 3 Lifting a wheelchair incorrectly can injure your back. Speak with your nurse about how to lift it safely if required.