

Get Rolling: Tips on Finding the Mobility Equipment You Need

Purchasing: Tips for Becoming a Smart Consumer

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Introduction

Have you seen those ads on TV that show how much better life is with a power chair or scooter? You know, the ones that show smiling happy people at the park and how easy it is for you to get your chair if you call their 800 numbers and trust them. Well the process isn't so simple. You have many different types and brands of wheelchairs, power chairs and scooters to choose from and each of these have different features that can make a difference in how they feel and work. Most people also can't afford the cost on their own. Most people need help from insurance, or if eligible from government programs like Medicare or Medicaid (called Medi-Cal in California) to help pay. Don't be tricked by those TV ads! If you call them they may encourage you to pay for your equipment yourself rather than bill Medicare / Medi-Cal or your insurance. The friendly voice on the phone will tell you the process is too complex and you won't have the same choices as if you just buy their power chair / scooter yourself. Would you choose to buy a car with out researching what you need or without driving it? If you choose a chair through a TV ad that is what you would be doing. You have to go through several steps to find a chair that is right for you and to get your insurance, or if eligible government programs to pay for it. In order to get your equipment you will work with your doctor to get a medical evaluation to document what you need and submit the information to the appropriate program to get your mobility equipment paid for. The process can seem complicated and sometimes you may have trouble getting approval for the equipment the first time. Many people give up too soon. Just because the insurance company or a government program such as Medicare or Medi-Cal (Medicaid) said they wouldn't pay for your chair the first time doesn't mean with a well written appeal they may not approve it. Persistence, patience and understanding the process and your available resources will be your best strategies for a successful outcome. There are many different types of equipment that help you with mobility including those that help with walking like canes, crutches and walkers. This document gives you tips on purchasing "wheeled mobility devices," including:

- **Manual wheelchairs** that are propelled by you, or someone that helps push you. The advantage of these chairs is they are generally cheaper, lighter weight and easier to transport. However, using the chair may require a certain amount of arm strength and endurance in order to meet your daily mobility needs. You can add various **assist devices such as the ones shown here:** <http://www.newmobility.com/2013/05/wheeling-beyond-limits-add-ons-for-your-chair/>) to help you move the chair.
- **Power wheelchairs** that are controlled through a joystick or **alternate control device** <http://www.newmobility.com/2013/05/wheeling-beyond-limits-add-ons-for-your-chair/>) such those controlled through your head, finger, or mouth and have many **seating options** http://wheelchairs.com/pwrseat_combinations.htm) including power seating that allows you to raise, lower and recline the seat.
- **Power Operated Vehicles (POV)**, commonly known as “**Scooters**” three- or 4- wheeled non-highway motorized transportation for people that have trouble walking. They are controlled by a tiller and do not look like a wheelchair.

Deciding to use a wheelchair or scooter can be an emotional decision and many people are reluctant to even think about it. However, if a lack of mobility is preventing you from doing the things you enjoy then you should definitely consider using equipment that helps you with your mobility. Many people who use mobility equipment describe the freedom they feel once they receive the equipment that is right for them. Many describe feeling like they can be more active in the community and have greater stamina for daily activities.

Selecting the Right Chair or Scooter:

No Returns, Refunds or Frequent Replacements

Whether you're replacing an outdated wheelchair, upgrading to something new, or looking for your first chair, there are many factors to consider when choosing a chair. How a chair works, how comfortable it is and even how it looks may all play a role in what makes it the best fit for you. One of the most important influences on whether or not you get the equipment you need is typically the cost. Most people rely on insurance, or government programs like Medicare or Medicaid (called Medi-Cal in California), to help pay for equipment. Getting these programs to agree to pay for your equipment can be complex and typically they only pay for a wheelchair, power chair or scooter once every five years or more. It is important to make the right choice by selecting the equipment that is reliable, easy to use, fits you well and meets your needs. For more information on how to navigate the insurance and government programs approval process for equipment see our fact sheet: ***Get Rolling: Tips on Paying For the Mobility***

Equipment You Need; Navigating Medicare, Medi-Cal and Private Insurance.

No matter how you get your equipment paid for through Medicare, Medi-Cal, a combination of both, private insurance, or even out of your own pocket, two critical tips to keep in mind:

1.Wheelchairs Are Approved Only Once Every 5 Years: Government programs and Insurance only pay for wheelchair, power chair or scooter (mobility equipment) once every five years.¹ It's important for you to choose a chair that is easy to use, fits you well and meets your needs. If you have a change in your medical condition (including weight gain) that requires a different wheelchair configuration or a power chair if you have a manual chair, Medi-Cal may cover a replacement chair sooner than five years. ⁱ

2.Once you get your chair or scooter it can't be returned. Like a new car, once you get your equipment in most cases it cannot be returned so it's important to pick the right equipment for you. However, you have rights that protect you against defective equipment. If you purchase a power chair or scooter and it is defective you may have rights through the [California's Lemon Law, The Song-Beverly Consumer Warranty Act. CA Civil Code Section 1790-1795.8](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=CIV§ionNum=1793.025) that requires the wheelchair supplier to repair or the manufacturer to replace the equipment. Hyper link: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=CIV§ionNum=1793.025.

While you will most likely have a team of individuals who will help you determine the right equipment for you, it is still important that you do your homework. It's easy to think you can simply trust the vendor that supplies the equipment, but vendors are often not users themselves and may have incentives to tell you to get certain models of equipment. Talk to users, they are a great source of information. This document will give you a list of tips from wheelchair / scooter users and questions to ask your vendor to make the most informed choice possible.

Styles of Wheelchairs and Scooters

As described above, there are three types of "wheeled mobility" equipment, Manual Wheelchairs, Power Wheelchairs and Scooters. Your needs may change over time. You may purchase one device and then after using it for a period of time may decide you need another device to meet your needs. ⁱⁱ

¹ Similar to Medicare, Medi-Cal will provide you with a new wheelchair, power wheelchair or scooter but only after it has reached its Reasonable Useful Lifetime (RUL). Reasonable Useful Lifetime (RUL) is estimated at, but no fewer than, five years. RUL begins on the day you receive your equipment

Manual Wheelchairs: Manual wheelchairs are designed for you to either push the chair and/or to have someone push you. There are several different types of manual chairs, with different designs for the ease of the person that is pushing them and the primary reason they are used. These types of chairs include:

Transport wheelchairs are compact and lightweight, with four small wheels, two in the front and two in the rear. They fold making them easy to take out of car trunks and SUVs. As the name suggests, these chairs are designed for someone to push you, to transport you, from place to place and are not to be sat in for long periods of time. They can't be adjusted, aren't easy to maneuver and have many limitations such as limited back support. (picture examples:

<http://www.1800wheelchair.com/category/369/transport-wheelchairs/>)

Reclining Wheelchairs have high backs; two large wheels on the side, two small wheels in the front, long padded leg and padded armrests that can be removed. Reclining Wheelchairs allow an individual to recline at different angles. These wheelchairs assist individuals who frequently need to change position or are unable to sit in an upright position. These chairs are not easy to transport but are designed to provide comfortable, full day seating for someone who is not able to wheel a chair on their own.ⁱⁱⁱ (picture examples:

http://www.1800wheelchair.com/ssearch/?q=+Reclining+Wheelchairs#/?_1&resultLayout=list)

Standard Wheelchairs This is what you think of when you see a wheelchair in a hospital or department store. Equipment suppliers offer them as loaner or rental chairs for short-term use. Standard wheelchairs are inexpensive and sturdy. However, they are heavy, made of steel weighing 30 – 50 pounds, are available in limited sizes, have few options for customization and no adjustability for comfort or to ease wheeling.^{iv} (picture example:

<http://www.1800wheelchair.com/ssearch/?q=+Standard+Wheelchairs>)

Lightweight Folding Frame Chairs, Non Adjustable and Adjustable types (less than 34 pounds) These are the most common type of wheelchair, weighing less than 34 pounds, which does not include the footrests or armrests and are made of lighter weight aluminum. These chairs are designed for people who use their chair daily and spend many hours a day in their chair. These wheelchairs have two large wheels on the side, two small wheels in the front and may have a handle(s) in the back where you can hang things, or allow someone to push the chair. These chairs are designed to fold for easy transport in the back seat or trunk of a car. They either come with standard parts with few adjustments, or with the ability to adjust various parts such as removable or height adjustable arm rests, swing-away, removable and height adjustable footrests, removable wheels and various seat position options.^{v vi vii} (picture examples:

<http://www.1800wheelchair.com/ssearch/?q=Lightweight+wheelchairs>)

Ultralight / Rigid (Non-Folding) Wheelchairs (less than 30lbs) are the lightest manual wheelchairs, designed for very active people, and those who require a very light chair because of their condition or to reduce repetitive use injuries. They can be customized for people involved in various sports and outdoor recreation activities. These chairs are typically made of Aluminum or Titanium; they don't fold, have fewer parts and less hardware and no moving frame parts, which make them very light weight. Most rigid frame chairs do allow the wheels to be removed and backrest to fold down making them smaller to fit in a car. These chairs are not as adjustable in terms of the position of the arm rests, the leg rests, seating and back support options as lightweight adjustable chairs. These chairs are typically more expensive, so it may be harder to get insurance companies to pay for them. If you think your needs require an Ultralight chair then talk to your doctor and the physical therapist who will be assisting you in evaluating you for the chair. They will be required to write detailed information on why you need the lightest possible wheelchair in order to get your insurance company to approve payment.^{viii ix} (picture examples: <http://www.1800wheelchair.com/ssearch/?q=Ultralight+>)

Why Choose a Manual Wheelchair?

If you have the physical strength and stamina to push a manual wheelchair, you may want to consider purchasing this chair. Manual wheelchairs are easier to transport, need fewer repairs, and provide a form of exercise. However, they are not for everyone; you need to have the ability to push the chair. Before deciding, you should consider the type of medical condition you have, your weight, fitness, strength, level of pain, and the environment in which you need to push. While pushing a manual wheelchair can be a form of exercise, it can also lead to arm injuries from repetitive use. This risk makes it critical to get the right chair, fitting to your needs and to learn how to effectively push it.

Manual Wheelchair Assist Devices

If you decide to purchase a manual chair but feel you sometimes need help pushing it, especially to reduce repetitive use injuries, you may consider adding an assist device. Many different types of assist devices are available including ones that you push but optimize your leverage and the method you use to wheel your chair, and those that are completely battery operated. The battery operated devices allow your manual chair to act more like a power chair, but will not give you the same distance as a power chair. Insurance companies and Medi-Cal / Medicare are unlikely to cover assist devices.^x

Scooters

A scooter is a powered chair on wheels with a steering wheel or handle. Scooters come in 3 & 4-wheel varieties and a seat mount on a platform which serves as a footrest. For people who have limited strength or stamina, a scooter may be a good option. Indoors a scooter can be easier to turn than a standard wheelchair.

Also, scooters have a swivel seat, allowing easier transfers from sitting to the standing position. Outside, the scooter is not as stable as a power chair, especially when turning at high speed. Scooters are also lighter weight than a power chair so they can easily tip over. Unlike a power chair, a scooter cannot be adjusted and re-configured with changes in your needs. You only have one option for how you drive the chair and the design of the seat.

Power Wheelchairs

Do you feel like you have limitations in your energy? A power wheelchair can allow you to be active in your home and community without expending a lot of energy or wearing out your muscles. This, in turn, can benefit you by allowing you to conserve your energy for other activities important to you. Both power wheelchairs and scooters allow you to travel for long distances, compared to how far you might be able to go in a manual chair. The difference between a power wheelchair and a scooter is that a power wheelchair has more durability, is more stable (less likely to tip over and you will be more secure in your seat – especially in non smooth terrain), and has a larger seat. Power wheelchairs have more options with center wheel drives or front wheel drives for a small turning radius in tight spaces. Power chairs are much heavier than scooters, 250 to 350 pounds without the user. When considering buying a power chair you need to consider how you will get it around town, will you take public transportation or will you drive? Most power wheelchairs cannot be folded or easily lifted so you will need to purchase a lift to attach to the back of your car or consider buying a van with a ramp.^{xi} These are typically not covered by insurance.

You have many power chair options to consider, with some starting as low as \$3000 to as high as \$30,000. Many of the power chairs on the cheaper side tend to be kits that can be retrofitted to a manual chair, thereby maintaining some portability (such as removing batteries), but are not as stable and don't have the range of distance of a dedicated power chair. Higher-end chairs are constructed of extremely strong materials and may be equipped with full suspension systems and, in some cases, systems that can control electronics such as lights, powered doors, etc. The cost depends on how you customize the chair, with a variety of seats, backs, headrests, controls, and accessories (such as cup, equipment holders, lights, etc). Power wheelchairs have more options on how you can operate them, some with a joystick using your hand, or using other body parts such as blowing into a straw with your mouth, touching a switch using your tongue, directing the chair using your feet or your eyes. When considering what type of chair you want first think about what you want for the **power base** (containing the motors, wheels, batteries and control module) and the **seating** (the feel of where you sit).

Power Base – The position of the drive wheel, where the wheels are positioned on the base is the biggest difference. Power wheelchair manufacturers offer

three types of "drives" – rear wheel, mid wheel and front wheel drive chairs. The placement of the wheels changes how the chair moves. Each position has advantages and disadvantages in how the chair drives indoors and outdoors. Like a car, you need to test drive before you buy. Try all three, a rear wheel, mid wheel and front wheel chair to figure out which one feels most comfortable to control.^{xii}

Rear-wheel-drive (RWD) The power is behind the person, so that it feels as if the chair is being pushed from behind. This used to be the "typical type" of power chair, with the wheels in the back and the casters up front. If you want to go fast, these types of chairs give you the highest speed, while giving you the best stability and control. This is an ideal chair for outdoors. The heavy batteries are located between the rear drive wheels providing good balance in nearly any terrain. The disadvantage of a RWD power wheelchair is the wheelchair's size and ability to turn. For example, when moving around a corner the entire wheelchair must clear the corner before turning, this requires more space than the other chairs.^{xiii}

Front-wheel-drive (FWD) chairs are harder to find than rear-wheel or mid-wheel chairs. With the drive wheels in front of the seating area, a front-wheel drive chair is designed to pull itself over terrain and obstacles such as curbs. These chairs are considered good for uneven terrain including softer areas like grass and up and down hills. With no front caster wheels your foot position can be close to your body and your seat to floor height low. If you want to go fast this is not the chair for you. With most of the weight of the chair in the back, they can be difficult to drive, and have to be driven at lower speeds. The low speed is to prevent the chair from "fishtailing," the rear wheels losing traction making you skid to one side, causing you to need to steer quickly.^{xiv} These chairs have difficulty turning in small spaces because they have a large back end but do well around tight corners because of small front end. To make sure you have a stable chair get one that has the weight of the batteries in the back. If the chair has one battery in the front and one in the back it won't be stable and can tip forward if you break hard. You can also feel like you will tip forward if you drive the chair fast down a big hill. Driving uphill, especially too fast you may feel like you lose traction and have less control over the chair. If you have big hills in your area, and/ or want to go fast you will likely wish to consider other drive options.^{xv}

Mid-wheel-drive (MWD) chairs were developed as a compromise between FWD and RWD chairs. The idea of the MWD chair is to try and get the maneuverability of a FWD chair with the stability of a RWD chair. This combination makes this chair the most popular. The power is under the person. This offers the smallest turning radius, it can turn in a 360° circle using only the footprint of the wheelchair, a plus in small homes, offices, and other places where space is tight. Outdoors, the chairs are as fast as RWD chairs, are very stable and can take slopes and hills very well.^{xvi}

For more detailed information see the fact sheet by the Australian, Queensland Spinal Cord Injury Service: Comparison of Front, Mid and Rear Wheel Drive Power Chairs. <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/gscis/documents/pdwc-comparison.pdf>

Once a particular (drive wheel placement has been chosen, there are several different models (from different manufacturers) from which to choose. Popular are Quickie, Invacare, and Permobil, but there are also a number of other brands. You will notice that many chairs, regardless of brand, use many of the same parts such as footrests, wheels, tires, batteries, etc. The major differences between brands are the frames and configuration. Some insurance companies and vendors may favor one brand over another, so it's important to research the various power chairs, to find the one best suited for your needs.^{xvii} To learn more about different models see a series of videos from the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation http://www.christopherreeve.org/site/c.mtKZKgMWKwG/b.8124165/k.D9D4/Power_Wheelchair_Comparisons.htm

Power Wheelchair Seating

The types of seats on a power chair either don't move -- feel like a car seat, or have power seating. Power seating can help relieve pressure on your low back, manage posture if you cannot shift your weight, provide the ability to stretch your hip muscles and can make assistance with personal care needs easier. If you feel you need power seating on your power wheelchair you should discuss it with your doctor and the physical therapist helping you evaluate the type of chair you need. They must provide reasons to your insurance (or Medi-Cal, Medicare) why it's important your chair includes these features. The three main types are:

Reclining wheelchair changes the angle between the seat and backrest, helps to stretch hip flexors and makes attending to catheters, toileting and transfers easier. If you have trouble sitting up on the edge of a bed, or have, or at high risk for pressure sores you should consider a wheelchair that has capability to recline or tilt.^{xviii}

Tilt-in-space wheelchair tilts the seat and backrest together, but keeps the hip and knee in the same position when tilting back. A tilt system helps redistribute pressure from one area (thighs and butt) to another area (trunk and head).^{xix}

Seat elevating and standing chairs allow you to elevate the chair or stand you upright. These chairs can help you reach items on counters or shelves and can help with transfers.^{xx}

For more information on the reasons for and advantages of different power

seating options see: Lange, M. L. (2000, June). Tilt in space versus recline--New trends in an old debate. Technology Special Interest Section quarterly, 10, 1-3. Available online:

http://www.wheelchairnet.org/wcn_prodserv/clinicians/tilt_vs_recline.html

For tips to provide to your physical therapist on getting your insurance to cover a chair with power seating see: JUSTIFY IT: SEAT ELEVATION, March 2015 Mobility Management. <https://mobilitymgmt.com/Articles/2015/03/01/Seat-Elevation.aspx>

Standard and Alternative Power Chair Controls

A **standard joystick** allows you to control the movement, speed, power, and sometimes seat functions with a moveable stick with usually a flip switch or sometimes buttons on the side. A joystick is the most common device used to operate a power wheelchair, but if you have a limited range of motion or strength in your hand, wrist or arms, then using a standard wheelchair can be difficult. You have many other alternative control options. You should talk to your supplier, they can make adjustments to how your wheelchair is programmed that may make it easier for you to operate.^{xxi} If you need an alternate control system, you will need to be evaluated by your wheelchair evaluation team and they may ask a therapist who specializes in customized assistive technology solutions to help you. The team will work with your wheelchair supplier to find the best solution for you. Some examples include: ^{xxii xxiii xxiv}

Proportional Input Devices

A standard joystick is an example of a proportional input device. This means that the amount of movement on the joystick will correspond with a given rate of movement of the wheelchair, similar to how a gas pedal on a car works. The further the joystick is pushed out in any direction, the faster the wheelchair will go. Alternative joysticks that require very little force are available. Examples include:

Stand Alone Joystick – This joystick operates the same as a standard but only offers the ability to drive the wheelchair. Power, speed, profile, and mode all must be controlled by another display. The benefit is that it is smaller than a standard joystick and can be mounted wherever you need it. Chin drive, footdrive, and mid mount are just a few locations available. Numerous joystick handles such as a ball, knob or a goal-post handle can be fitted to give you the best control of the joystick.

Mini Joystick – This joystick is the size of a human thumb and requires minimal pressure and effort to operate the wheelchair. This is used if you operate the chair using your chin, and/or mouth or finger. The negative is that because it doesn't take a lot of pressure on the joystick to get the chair to move, the speed

and direction can be difficult to control.

Non-proportional Input Devices (Switch Devices)

A switch is an example of a non-proportional drive control. This means that the switch is either “on” or “off”, similar to how a light switch works. Each switch is pre-programmed for one direction and speed. Activating the switch activates the movement of the wheelchair for a set speed and direction. Switches can be either mechanical or electronic. Mechanical switches require a push of the switch to activate. Electronic can be moved by a simple touch on a surface. Examples of these devices include:

Proportional Head Control – This joystick is similar to a standalone joystick but mounts onto the headrest. Pressure on the headrest controls the speed and direction of the wheelchair. There are two issues to be aware of on this system. First, in order to operate this joystick in reverse, a separate switch must be mounted to toggle between reverse and forward directions. Secondly, when used in conjunction with tilt in space function on some chairs, the drive function must be disengaged to allow the user to use the headrest as a rest and not a drive control

Touch Drive – Similar to the mouse pad on a laptop, you operate it by sliding your hand or finger over an area just like you would a mouse. This is a great option if you have trouble with small hand movements but can do big hand movements or good control over your finger.

Finger Steering – Operates by putting your finger in a box and moving it in various positions.

Magitek – A tilt sensor is attached to your head, foot, hand or other part of the body with controlled movement. “Tilting” the sensor in different directions and range drives the wheelchair.

Mouth Sensor – A sensor with small buttons is attached to a mouth retainer and controlled with the tongue to control the direction and speed of the wheelchair.

Head Array – This device recognizes the position of your head using switches mounted in the headrest. It allows for 4 directions steering plus veering and additional switches can be added.

Switch Joystick – This is joystick-like but is very small. This device can be mounted in different positions and control 8 directions and various speeds.

Multifunction switches – Are switches mounted to a board or laptray. These work well for people with limited hand and arm movements. It has limits in functions and directions because it only has an on/ off function and a 4-button switch.

Scanner – This technology uses either an audible tone or display that indicates to the user which direction the chair will travel. A single function switch is needed to “scan” the system until the desired direction has been chosen. A switch is activated to initiate wheelchair movement in the selected direction.

Game Controller Adapter – If you can use a video game controller but have trouble driving a wheelchair then this device may be for you. This technology uses an actual game controller to drive the wheelchair.

Sip n Puff – Typically, this type of drive control is used if you can’t control your hands, arms, legs or head. A straw is attached to a controller, the person then “sips” or “puffs” for the chair to move in different direction. You need the ability to breath well and need help cleaning it to make sure it keeps working.

Components to Consider When Choosing a Chair

Footrests support your feet and lower legs. You have many options to consider including fixed, folding or swing-away to make transferring easier. They also come in many different styles of footplates where you rest your feet.^{xxv} When choosing your chair you need to consider the footrest height. When you sit with your feet on the footrests they should be able to sit flat and well supported rather than dangling. You also need to check they are not too high which you can do by looking at your knees. If your knees are higher than your hips the footrests are too high – the wheelchair shop can usually easily adjust them. Make sure the footrests can be taken off altogether if you need to put the wheelchair in a car.^{xxvi}

Legrests are most common in reclining and tilting manual and power wheelchairs, used by people that can benefit from elevating their legs. They are very heavy so are not typically included in lightweight chairs.^{xxvii}

Armrests allow you to rest your arms when you’re not moving. They can come in different heights (fixed or adjustable) and different lengths (full length, desk length) and can be fixed in position or can be removed or are hinged to flip out of the way for ease of transferring out of the chair. If you want arm rests it’s important to find ones that fit you. The position of armrests can alter the way you propel your wheelchair. Many individuals choose not to have armrests because they don’t like the way they look or they get in the way of wheeling the chair.^{xxviii}

Folding and lifting You need to consider how you will transport your wheelchair or scooter. Will you be taking public transportation, have a car or van with a lift or will you be using a car or SUV with a backseat and trunk? If you will be using a car, make sure that you or any other person who will be lifting and/ or folding it has practice before you buy. You need to check that you or your assistants can manage the weight and that it fits your particular car. Many wheelchairs have

wheels that can pop off and armrests that lift out to make the job easier. Some power chairs and scooters have batteries that lift off to allow the chair to be folded.^{xxix}

Seat width Your wheelchair should be just wide enough that you can still fit if you wear a jacket, but you should not be able to slip your fist down either side. A wheelchair that is too wide will not offer enough support and will often cause the user to lean to one side.^{xxx}

Seat depth When you sit in your wheelchair with your bottom all the way back, your thighs should be well supported and the seat should come to about 1 inch behind your knee. Any closer and your legs will rub against the edge causing you to slump down. If the seat is too short for your thighs you will not be comfortable for long and your posture will suffer.^{xxxi}

Wheel locks: Manual wheelchairs have **wheel locks**. Wheel locks are not brakes because they do not slow you down or stop your chair from moving. In fact, relying on locks to slow yourself down can be dangerous to both you and your wheelchair. Wheel locks act like a parking brake, to keep your wheelchair in one place when you transfer to other seats. You have a choice in a few wheel lock styles. The **push/pull to lock** style of wheel locks are the standard choice used for most manual wheelchairs. You work the lock by pulling the lever back or pushing forward until the bar presses in on the tire. A lock system that you pull to lock and push to release is the most common, however, not necessarily the best for you. Some people feel they get in their way and cause hand injuries. Each push/pull to lock system is designed for different levels of strength and coordination, be sure you feel comfortable using the locking mechanism before making your decision. If you are more of an active wheelchair user, you may want to consider **scissor locks**. These locks sit level with wheelchair frame, keeping your hands clear from potential injuries when not used. Be sure to consider that the smaller, more concealed design could be challenging if you struggle with fine motor skills. Scissor locks may not be covered by insurance, Medi-Cal or Medicare. Some people feel that wheel locks (particularly push / pull style) can get in the way of wheeling the chair and can add weight to the chair. For this reason many individuals choose not to have wheel locks, relying on their hands to keep their chair still. Not having wheel locks can increase the risk of the chair moving during a transfer.^{xxxii}

Tires: Tires are either air-filled, foam filled or solid. Air-filled are the most lightweight but must be filled on occasion and can be punctured. Foam filled won't puncture, but are heavier and can add to the strength necessary to push the chair. Solid tires are low-cost and don't require filling or fixing but are less cushioned making a rougher ride. Like a car, you can also purchase various **types of wheels** for the larger side wheels and smaller front caster wheels made of different types of materials. The type of material makes a difference in the weight, speed and visual design of the chair.^{xxxiii xxxiv}

Handrims (Pushrims): Manual wheelchairs have handrims, sometimes known as pushrims, the part the wheelchair user grips to propel the wheelchair. Handrims are attached to the wheelchair wheel by a set of bolts and can be removed to narrow the wheelchair for people who don't self-propel their wheelchair. There are a variety of pushrims with different friction coatings and shapes that may assist with propulsion and reduce the risk of injury to the hand. The type of handrim you have on your wheelchair can add to the cost.^{xxxv}

Backrest: For manual wheelchairs, sling backrests are the most common, but provide little postural support. Adjustable tension backrests can provide more support and can be adjusted over time. Rigid backrests provide the best support, but may make it more difficult to collapse the chair. The weight and height of the backrest are important. In general, the lighter the better, with carbon fiber backrests being the lightest option (but may not be covered by insurance). If support is not needed, a lower backrest is better as it does not get in the way of pushing.^{xxxvi} When you are deciding if the backrest is right for you, lean back in the chair and check that the support goes all the way up your spine. It should not be so high that it interferes with you moving your arms or head.^{xxxvii} For power chairs either come with a standard “captain seat” which looks like a car seat or is custom designed with different options in the curve of the backrest.

Seat cushions: Cushions come in a huge variety of options. The right cushion prevents injury, including pressure sores, and helps determine how stable you feel in the chair and the ability to move it. Cushions are designed to be adjustable, non-adjustable and custom fit or molded. Shaping different types and various layers of foam based on your buttock makes the custom fit design. The adjustable design generally uses a fluid (air, gas, liquid or gel) that can be altered by addition or removal of the fluid (such as removing air from a cushion or adding or removing packets of gel). Cushions no matter what the type do wear out over time. In general, insurance companies and (Medi-Cal / Medicare) have been approving a cushion once every five years. For a variety of reasons your cushion may not last five years. Anytime the cushion you are using shows signs it isn't doing an effective job of protecting your skin, for example you notice your skin remaining red after a day of sitting, please see your doctor right away and get a seating evaluation. While a non-adjustable cushion may be cheaper, your needs from your cushion may change over time. To get a new cushion you will need a seating evaluation and approval of the new cushion. Having a cushion that does not fit you well can cause pressure ulcers. With an adjustable cushion you can quickly adjust the cushion to adapt to your needs if skin issues arise. As always, when it comes to ordering a new cushion, it is vital to make sure the exact make, model, and size cushion are on all therapists' and physicians' prescriptions.^{xxxviii xxxix}

Seat belt For a power chair you might consider having a seat belt for extra security. It should sit low on your hips and not push into your stomach. You should be able to undo the seatbelt yourself without relying on anybody else.

Do Your Homework:

Equipment, Models of the Equipment and Suppliers

“Before ordering new equipment, be sure that you can try it out in your home, work place and vehicle to be sure that it will fit your lifestyle. Realize that you can't return a wheelchair so it has to be right. If trying out a wheelchair doesn't work for you because you need a customized chair, be sure that the Rehab Technology Specialist (employed by the vendor) and the Occupational Therapist involved in the ordering fully understand your needs. Don't assume that they know all the answers because they can and DO make mistakes. Ask other wheelchair users which chairs they like and dislike. Do your own homework.”

- *Quote provided through an interview with a power wheelchair user.*

Figuring out what type of chair you need can be a complex task. First consider how you will use your chair in different places, home, community, and for work/school/volunteering activities.

- **Home** –Critical features of the wheelchair will affect your ability to use your wheelchair or scooter in your home. Your ability to transfer (getting in and out of the chair) for example. What is the height of the seat from the floor? How does that height compare to your bed? Do the armrests or foot supports move out of the way to make your transfer easier? What is the overall width of the chair, will it fit through your doorways? Can your wheelchair get in your front door? Do you have areas in your house or apartment building only accessible by stairs?
- **Community** – How do you want to travel in the community? Do you have access to transportation? Do you get tired easily? Would a power option (power assist wheels, power chair or scooter) provide a better way of getting around? Will you have more energy to do other things if you have a power chair or scooter? Do you plan to do a lot of outdoor recreation like going on hiking trails or do you prefer indoor activities? Your choice of tires, wheels and type of base can make a world of difference getting around the store versus hitting the trail. Do you have sidewalks with curb cuts in your area or will you be on the street? This makes a difference in the speed of the chair you use and the type of drive position of a power chair.
- **Transportation** – Will you use public transportation or will you drive a car? If

you drive a car think about several questions: Can the chair fold? Can you store it in the trunk or within the car? Can you get it in the trunk and then walk to the car door? If not you may require a van or mini van with a ramp or lift. You must consider that vans are expensive and are not covered by insurance.

Talk to Other Users and Do research on the Internet

Ask other users, particularly those with similar conditions or body types about their own experiences such as:

1. What brands of wheelchairs and scooters do you like?
2. What models of those brands do you like and why?
3. How far can you go between charges?
4. Do you feel balanced in the chair? Do you feel like you can tip over?
5. How does the chair maneuver in different conditions like unstable side walks, on gravel, going top speed, up steep hills or curb cuts, turning in tight corners, through door ways, up ramps and on public transportation?
6. What has your experience been with repairs to the chair or scooter?
7. What things on the chair or scooter have broken?
8. What types of wheelchair cushions do you like? (adjustable and non-adjustable)
9. How do you clean the cushion?
10. How long did the cushion last?
11. Have you tried to replace the cushion under warranty?

Once you identify the brands and models you are considering look for reviews on the Internet to figure out what challenges people have had and any difficulty they have had with repairs and getting parts. You may also want to look at the manual for the chair to get an idea of how it is controlled.

If the chair will be used by a child, or by a person with a progressive condition, it is important to ask if it is adaptable and “growable.” That is, can it be adapted to meet the person’s changing physical requirements for seating or size, can tilt or recline features or different controllers be added in the future — or will you need a completely new wheelchair.

Getting Evaluating

Getting a wheelchair is more than just talking to people, looking at pictures, and reading slick manufacturers ads. The process of getting approval for a wheelchair or scooter can take several weeks or months. However, you may receive a loaner or temporary rental chair much faster if you have an immediate need. Once you go to your doctor you may be given a referral to a physiatrist, a doctor that specializes in physical medicine and rehabilitation, or to a team that

will get together with you and help you make some decisions on the type of ride you will get. If you buy the chair on your own, this process is your choice, but can be very helpful to find the chair that is right for you. If Medicare/Medicaid, private insurance, or the Department of Veterans Affairs is funding your wheels, you will likely need to undergo an evaluation. For more specific information on this process see our fact sheet: [Get Rolling: Tips on Paying For the Mobility Equipment You Need](#); [Navigating Medicare, Medi-Cal and Private Insurance](#).

Physiatrist and wheelchair evaluation teams know a lot about wheelchairs and can write a detailed prescription and can work with the wheelchair supplier to help select and make adjustments to the chair you choose. If you require special features such as back rests, seats, special cushions, and drive controls they will write a detailed medical description of why these features are needed. This will assist your doctor in submitting the justification to your insurance company. A wheelchair evaluation team typically includes: ^{xl}

- **You and if you choose someone from your family or an advocate.**
You should be the primary person that guides the direction of your team. The point of the evaluation process is to get the best chair for you. It should be something your comfortable using every day, easy to maneuver, well fitting, comfortable, durable, safe and it must not contribute to future problems like shoulder injuries.
- **An Occupational Therapist or a Physical Therapist** Registered and licensed by the state, some people have additional training as a certified Assistive Technology Provider (ATP) this means that they have completed additional training and passed a [certifying examination](#) from [RESNA](#).² (footnote)
- **A Rehabilitation Technology Supplier (Wheelchair Vendor / DME Dealer)**- The other important team members is the Rehabilitation Technology Supplier. This person is sometimes called a "vendor" or a "durable medical equipment" dealer. It is their job to know all about specific kinds of wheelchairs, to know the equipment features and manufacturers and to be able to compare the characteristics of wheelchairs and cushions. Like therapists, it's better if the supplier is credentialed by [RESNA](#) or by [NRRTS](#). This means that they have gotten additional training and are committed to a code of ethics.

² You can find out more about registration and licensure at the [American Occupational Therapy Association](#) or the [American Physical Therapy Association](#). If your clinician is certified as an Assistive Technology Provider (ATP) this is an excellent credential and means that they have complete additional training and passed a [certifying examination](#) from [RESNA](#). <http://www.resna.org/PracInAT/CertifiedPractice/Directory/Practitioners.html> to possibly find a credentialed provider in your area.

- Occasionally, a **Rehabilitation Engineer** is on the team, especially in an evaluation center that works with clients with more complex physical disabilities. Rehabilitation engineers are experts at customizing equipment that is commercially available or at fabricating something completely unique. It is their job to know about loads, forces, torques, moments, and the interaction of those things with your body and your wheelchair. These are all of the things that affect how your wheelchair will perform for you over the long run.

Steps in the Process of Getting a Wheelchair ^{xli}

Depending on how you pay for your wheelchair, you pay, your insurance or a government program like Medicare and/or Medi-Cal, the process you will go through and the types of information you may have to give may be different but in general you can expect the following steps:

1. **History and physical exam:** by physician, OT, and/or PT as part of a evaluation team, who will use this information to justify (to the insurance company or a program like Medicare and/ or Medi-Cal) the wheelchair and seating system you need. Often called The Face-to-Face Mobility Examination, your doctor or another doctor such as a Physical Therapist (PT) or Occupational Therapist (OT), will examine you in person and fill out paper work that shows your symptoms, diagnosis, history of the condition, if you've tried physical therapy and have you used a manual wheelchair if you are requesting a power wheelchair. They will also ask a series of question called a **Functional Assessment**. This assessment is designed to determine if you have difficulty with Mobility-Related Activities of Daily Living (MRADLs). Your MRADLs are your ability to do daily activities like eating, bathing, dressing and going to the bathroom, in your home.^{xliii} To evaluate your MRADLs your doctor will answer a series of questions relating to your abilities.^{-3,4}

Functional Assessment questions include things like:

- a. Your ability to transfer assisted and unassisted between bed, chair, and mobility equipment (wheelchair, or scooter)
- b. Your Ability, if any, to walk around your home to bathroom, kitchen, living room.

³ This criteria is for Medicare but generally health plans adopt a similar criteria and in many cases the same process. Medicare's 9 step algorithm is a series of questions and steps to figure out if you qualify for Medicare to may for your mobility equipment. For more information see: <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Coverage/CoverageGenInfo/downloads/MAEAlgorithm.pdf> and <http://www.adldata.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Algorithm.pdf>

⁴ Many manufacturers and suppliers have created forms that have not been approved by Medicare. These forms are sent to the physician with instructions to complete, sign and date. Even if the physician completes this type of form and puts it in his/her chart, the supplier-generated form is not a substitute for the face-to-face exam.

2. *You Need Your Wheelchair or Scooter in Your Home:* As

described above, your doctor, or a physical therapist, will work with you to complete a report, to show what you cannot do now and what you could do if you had a wheelchair or scooter. They must show you're unable to do things like bathing, dressing, getting in or out of a bed or chair, or using the bathroom (called Mobility- Related Activities of Daily Living, or MRADLs) in your home, even with the help of a cane, crutch, or walker. The report must describe what kind of danger you may be in if you don't get a wheelchair or scooter (such as risk for falls, etc). You have a health condition that causes significant difficulty moving around in your **home**. You must have a medical need for your insurance, Medicare and Medi-Cal to cover a manual wheelchair, power wheelchair or scooter. In most cases you must show that the wheelchair or scooter must be required "in order to provide a safe and functional means to get around inside the house." ^{xliii} You may be confused by the use of the term "in the home," believing it means that your scooter or wheelchair can't be used outside of the home. This isn't the case, you can use it outside the house. The goal is to demonstrate that if you didn't have the manual wheelchair, power wheelchair or scooter it would be difficult for you to move around your home, let alone go outside. In other words, Medicare won't cover this equipment if it'll be used mainly for leisure or recreational activities, or if it's only needed to move around outside your home. Therefore all your medical records and paper work you submit to the health plan, must support and explain the need for the wheelchair within the home. ^{xliv} Medicare use to have a rule that said you had to be "bed bound," you could only get equipment if you couldn't get out of bed. This is no longer the case. ^{xlv} Most insurance companies follow a similar rule. Medi-Cal recently has a little more flexibility in this rule. For more information see our fact sheet: Get Rolling: Tips on Paying For the Mobility Equipment You Need; Navigating Medicare, Medi-Cal and Private Insurance.

3. *Find a Wheelchair or Scooter Supplier* ^{xlvi} Most insurance and government programs require you to get your equipment through an approved supplier. For example, with traditional Medicare (not through a health plan), you have to get your equipment through an approved supplier and from a list of approved equipment. The list is called the Competitive Bidding program. These vendors bid to be a Medicare supplier. Medicare uses these bids to set the amount it will pay for medical equipment. Call 1-800-MEDICARE or go to <https://www.medicare.gov/SupplierDirectory/> to find your local approved supplier enter your zip code into this link. ^{xlvii} (For more information on this and the process through other government programs and insurance see our fact sheet Get Rolling: Tips on Paying For the Mobility Equipment You Need; Navigating Medicare, Medi-Cal and Private Insurance.) In many cases, but not always, these

suppliers these suppliers /dealers/ DME vendors are credentialed by RESNA or by NRRTS. This means that they have gotten additional training and are committed to a code of ethics. If you are purchasing your equipment on your own, whenever possible, try to work with equipment suppliers that are RESNA or NRRTS certified.

4. **Test Drive:** You should always, when possible, test-drive the device. Ideally this will occur at the clinic during your visit and later during the home assessment. A good wheelchair clinic should have the ability to get devices for you to test drive during your visit. If your chair needs to be highly customized you may not be able to test drive a chair with all the features but should be able to test drive different types of chairs with some of the features you need.
5. **Home assessment:** It is best to have a supplier or therapist assess your home to recommend appropriate equipment that fits the size of your home and the activities you do. Some insurance plans (including Medicare) require this step, and others do not.
6. **The Evaluation Summary:** At the end of your evaluation the team will write an evaluation report. It summarizes the findings and the recommendations from the team. The report is sent to your physician and will be shared with your insurance company. You should ask for a copy of the report. If you notice any surprises in the notes, call the clinic and discuss it with them.
7. **Submit Required Information to Insurance or Government Programs:** If you are getting your equipment through insurance or a government program such as Medicare and / or Medi-Cal your doctor /evaluation team/ or equipment supplier will submit forms saying why you need the equipment. This information shows you have a “verifiable medical condition”.... usually written by a person very familiar with you and the product recommended. Usually it is a therapist but in some cases experienced rehabilitation technology suppliers write them. [They take] the recommendations that come out of the evaluation and correlate them to the features of a recommended wheelchair or seating system to “paint a picture” for the payer. It is a letter or form that helps the third-party payer understand why certain features or characteristics of the recommended equipment are important. A good letter or filled out form should describe the relationship between product features and how it will improve your daily life. It is important that the items being requested are written in the letter in a way that justifies them as medically necessary. If request equipment is requested without justification the insurance company won’t pay for it. A letter of justification also helps third-party payers realize why it might be better to spend a little more money for a certain feature on a wheelchair now in order to avoid a more costly expense later. A letter of justification is an expert opinion about what is best for you! If a therapist or supplier is good at writing this kind of a

letter that makes them a very valuable resource for helping you get the kind of equipment that you really need.”

This approval process can take several days to even weeks. Be sure to follow up and ask how long the process will take. Be respectful and tell the insurance representative you appreciate their efforts in getting the chair approved. Sometimes delays are beyond one individual's control. Even when a representative wants to help you the process can be complicated and take time. Be respectful but still be firm when you feel unnecessary delays have occurred. If you need help have the clinic or your doctor also contact the insurance company. Sometimes that can make the approval process go faster.

6. *Submission of Prescription to Equipment Vendor:* Once approval from your third-party payer (insurance, Medi-Cal / Medicare) The information in the evaluation report will be used by your doctor or physical / occupational therapist to write a prescription describing what you need. The equipment vendor will work with you to design, order, make sure the equipment works well and teach you how to operate your new chair or scooter. Typically a care coordinator either from your evaluation team or your insurance company will help you navigate this process and make sure all information is received by the equipment vendor. Its important to follow up with both your insurance company, the evaluation clinic and your equipment supplier to make sure no unnecessary delays are happening in the approval and ordering process. Remember to be friendly but express your needs firmly and respectfully. Ask for specific information on why delays are occurring and ask for ways you can help to make the process go faster and more smoothly.

7. *Delivery, final fitting and wheelchair driving skills training:* Ideally the wheelchair will be delivered to the wheelchair fit clinic, where the team will make sure that the wheelchair that was ordered is, in fact, what was delivered. In addition, the chair will likely need to be adjusted for the best fit. Finally, the team will train you on how to use the chair properly to avoid injury. If you need some vendors will also deliver the chair directly to your home.

Tips for Dealing with the Evaluation and Supply Team

The staff is there to help guide you in finding the chair that is right for you. These tips may help you better deal with the staff. ^{xlviii}

1. *Make Sure They Hear Your Needs*

This is your chance to be heard, so get those questions and concerns out there. They may have opinions on what you need but it may not be right for you. Give people information; correct people when they are wrong and respectfully redirect the conversation back to your needs when you have concerns. Come prepared with a list, information about your disability, your functional ability, your likes, dislikes and experiences with different wheelchairs, your home/community/work

environment, recreational pursuits, your means of transportation, caregiver concerns, and questions about chairs and components you have researched on your own. If you have other people in your life that know your needs and daily habits you may want to bring them to your appointments. They may provide valuable information and may have concerns related to weight of the wheelchair, portability, maintenance, ease of pushing chair and user, and compatibility with other home equipment. This information will give the clinic insights into who you are and what your needs are. It's important you are treated as an individual with unique needs.

2. Know your Team

Your new wheelchair will be as good as the team that advises you. Your team may have a range of experience and knowledge. You may meet someone that has less experience.. Don't be afraid to share your knowledge. Sometimes a rookie will be excited to learn, have lots of energy and will probably have as many questions as you do. This can help keep the pros on their toes, bring new ideas to the conversation that may give you more choices.

3. Go with the flow.

You may be asked to do certain things or go to certain places or clinics, maybe more than once on different days. You may be asked similar questions several times or be giving out information that you know is somewhere on some form that you handed in. Just do it! It's a good sign when team members confirm and reconfirm information. Don't jeopardize the evaluation by being rude or in a rush to get a new chair. It can be hard, but you will be more likely to get what you want if you jump through the hoops.

4. They Don't Know Everything

The evaluation, especially if your needs are complicated, may take more than one visit. In order to help you, the clinic team may need a lot of information about your condition. They may have to do additional research. There may be times when a clinic member may need to seek technical or clinical advice, look up things, call manufacturers, or confer with another staff member. Do not take this as a sign of ignorance. It is not. There are hundreds of wheelchairs out there and thousands of accessories and aftermarket products. No one knows them all. Take it as a good sign when someone goes searching for information or guidance. They are doing it on your behalf.

5. Your team Should Explain Your Choices.

There should be some logic to the choices. When certain chairs or chair components are recommended, there should be a good reason why that choice was made. If you want something and they recommend something different they should provide you with a reasonable explanation for the differing recommendation. You should be able to get an explanation for every option and every configuration decided on. Each feature and component selection should be discussed with you for your input. By the time it's all over, you should have a very

clear picture of the chair in your mind.

6. Try Out Before You Buy

If you need a standard basic chair you may be able to try the chair before you buy. If your needs are involved and require things like a non standard sized chair, specialty controls, an array of positioning devices or custom components, then trialing a precisely configured wheelchair may not be possible. Locating a "demo" wheelchair with all the right customization is hardly ever possible. Neither clinics or suppliers keep that many differently configured wheelchairs around. They may be able to find something that is close. If you are supplied with wheelchair to try the use it in the community. Talk the clinic or supplier into letting you use it for a few days in your real world and not just spinning it once around the corridor or showroom. Cruise your regular community paths and make your regular stops. Go to outdoor recreation places, like parks, you may have wanted to go to but haven't because of your mobility. Make sure you take notes on what worked for you and what didn't so they can make adjustments for your final chair.

7. Nothing is Perfect

If you're lucky your chair will meet all your needs. Unfortunately, particularly if this is your first chair and you may not know what you need, your chair may not be perfect. Don't be afraid to go back to them and ask for adjustments. I know it's frustrating, but have patience. Don't blame them the minute you talk to them, cooperate, be firm when you have to be and take control as needed.

Financial Considerations: Know What is Covered and Out of Pocket Costs

Insurance coverage: This is often a major consideration when choosing a wheelchair and may limit your choices. However, it is best to choose the optimal chair first and then figure out the financing. Each payer (medical insurance, Medicare/Medicaid, VA, or vocational rehabilitation) has their own set of "coverage criteria" and a system for purchasing. You need to be aware of what (if anything) you may pay out of pocket and plan how you will pay for it. For tips on navigating the insurance and government process see our fact sheet: [Get Rolling: Tips on Paying For the Mobility Equipment You Need; Navigating Medicare, Medi-Cal and Private Insurance](#)

Insurance Fact Sheet (insert link) If you have the resources, keep in mind all of these products can be purchased directly by you. If you have the resources, your private pay purchase can offer you greater selection, at less than manufacturer's suggested retail price (MSRP) in a more timely fashion – no need to wait for "authorization".

Other financial resources: Local resources to assist in purchasing your chair may be available through organizations such as United Cerebral Palsy or the Multiple Sclerosis Society. Despite their names, these organizations often help

people with any disability. Some individuals have fund-raisers through their church, temple, and school.

Finding and Working with Suppliers (Equipment or Wheelchair Vendors)

If your insurance company is paying for your wheelchair or scooter they most likely tell you which vendor you will be required to use. However, you still have a lot of influence over the type of equipment. In rare occasions you can ask to go to a different supplier if they don't offer the chairs, or modifications you need. You will have to file a request to go out of network.

Questions to Ask Your Wheelchair Vendor

When you meet with a wheelchair vendor / DME supplier think about a list of questions that can help make sure you get the chair or scooter you want and can make sure you can keep it running for many years. Ask not only about types of chairs and cushions, but also about repair, warranty and payment policies:

1. What brands of wheelchairs and scooters do you like and why?
2. What models of those brands do you like and why?
3. Can you custom design a chair if you don't have an off the shelf model I like?
4. What type of batteries for power chairs and scooters do you recommend?
5. How far can I go between charges?
6. How does the chair maneuver in different conditions like unstable side walks, on gravel, going top speed, up steep hills or curb cuts, turning in tight corners, through door ways, up ramps and on public transportation?
7. What is the warranty on the chair?
8. How do I get my chair repaired?
9. How difficult is it to get parts for the chair? On average how long does it take to get my chair repaired?
10. Can you make repairs in my home in an emergency?
11. Can you pick up or drop off my chair for repairs?
12. Can I get a loaner chair while I am waiting for my chair to be fixed?
13. What types of wheelchair cushions do you like? (non-adjustable and adjustable)
14. What is the return policy for the cushion?
15. What is the warranty for the cushion? How would I get it replaced under warranty?
16. How is the manufacturer's customer service?
17. How do you clean the cushion?
18. How long does the cushion typically last?
19. Do you file the claim with the insurance (Medi-Cal and Medicare)?
20. If I have to make a co-payment for my chair do you take credit cards? Do you have options for a payment plan?

21. If I purchase the chair on my own (not through insurance) do you offer a cash payment discount?
22. Do you sell ramps, car lifts or other things I may need to modify my home and transportation for my chair?

Local Equipment Vendors

Wheelchairs of San Mateo
808 Burlway Rd #7 Burlingame, CA 94010
650-342-4864
Other locations:
1251 California ave.#500 Pittsburg Ca. 94565
4000 Harlan Emeryville Ca.94608
<http://www.wheelchairtech.net>

Home Town Medical
75 Phelan Ave #1
San Jose, CA 95112
Phone:(408) 279-3955
<http://www.hometown-medical.com>

National Seating and Mobility (Primary vendor used by Kaiser, Multiple locations)
Campbell: 1190 Dell Ave, (408) 920-0390
Hayward: 2462 Tripaldi Way, (510) 856-4001
<http://www.nsm-seating.com>

Wheelchairs of Berkley
911 Shattuck Ave, Berkeley, CA 94705
Phone:(510) 549-8727
<http://www.wobwob.com>

Final Thoughts

Challenging Process But Don't Give Up

Choosing your equipment is complicated and sometimes you may have trouble getting approval from your insurance company or a government program the first time. Many people give up too soon. Just because the insurance company or a government program such as Medicare or Medi-Cal (Medicaid) said they wouldn't pay for your chair the first time doesn't mean with a well written appeal they may not approve it. Persistence, patience and understanding the process and your available resources will be your best strategies for a successful outcome.

Resources

You have a lot of resources on the Internet. Each manufacturer has a website describing their own product line, including Invacare, Permobil, Pride Mobility and Sunrise Medical. Other valuable resources include:

- www.usatechguide.org – large database of available products by category and wheelchair user reviews.
- www.wheelchairjunkie.com – consumer direct information regarding commercial products and a wheelchair users forum.
- www.resna.org – provides a directory of therapists (Assistive technology Practitioners (ATP) and Suppliers (ATS) who specialize in rehab products.
- www.nrrts.org – list of suppliers by state specializing in rehabilitation products.
- ABLEDATA is a non-commercial information center for assistive technology, including wheelchairs. Go to www.abledata.com (select Products, then Wheeled Mobility) or call 800-227-0216.

Books:

Consortium for Spinal Cord Medicine, Preservation of Upper Limb Function Following Spinal Cord Injury: What You Should Know (Paralyzed Veterans of America, 2005).

Choosing A Wheelchair: A Guide for Optimal Independence by Gary Karp (Cambridge, Mass: O'Reilly, 1998).

ⁱ Medicare Benefits Policy Manual, Ch 15, Sec.110.2 Repairs, Maintenance, Replacements and delivery. (Rev 212, 11/5/05) <https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Guidance/Manuals/downloads/bp102c15.pdf> Accessed 4/11/16.

ⁱⁱ Minkel, Jean, MA, PT. United Spinal Association, 1.3. A guide to wheelchair selection, Tech Guide Publication. Available Online. Accessed 2/16/16
<http://www.spinalcord.org/resource-center/askus/index.php?pg=kb.page&id=1412>

ⁱⁱⁱ Mobility Basics., Reclining Wheelchairs. Available Online. Accessed 2/24/16.
<https://mobilitybasics.ca/wheelchairs/recline>

^{iv} Mobility Basics., Standard Wheelchairs. Available Online. Accessed 2/24/16
<https://mobilitybasics.ca/wheelchairs/standard>

^v The Manual Wheelchair: What the SCI Consumer Needs to Know was developed by Michael Boninger, MD, in collaboration with the Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center. Available Online. Accessed 2/24/16
<http://www.msktc.org/sci/factsheets/wheelchairs/The-Manual-Wheelchair>

^{vi} Mobility Basics. Light Weight Manual Wheelchairs. Available Online. Accessed 2/24/26. <https://mobilitybasics.ca/wheelchairs/lightweight>

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- vii Mobility Basics. Lightweight Adjustable Folding Wheelchairs. Available Online. Accessed 2/24/16. <https://mobilitybasics.ca/wheelchairs/lightadjustable>
- viii Mobility Basics, Rigid Wheelchairs. Accessed 2/24/16. Available online: <https://mobilitybasics.ca/wheelchairs/rigid>
- ix Boninger, M. et al.
- x Vogel, Bob., New Mobility, 5/1/2013. Available Online. Accessed 2/25/16/ <http://www.newmobility.com/2013/05/wheeling-beyond-limits-add-ons-for-your-chair/>
- xi Minkel, Jean, MA, PT. United Spinal Association, 1.3. A guide to wheelchair selection, Tech Guide Publication. Available Online. Accessed 2/16/16
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