
Maintenance of Your Manual Wheelchair

Knowing a few strategies and facts can keep you happy with the function of your wheelchair and even save you money. If your chair is new it should come with an owner's manual. Ask for one from the vendor who provided the chair. If your wheelchair comes from a recycle pool the vendor may still be able to help you in getting a manual.

Cleaning

Your chair can be cleaned with water and a mild soap like dish soap. To prevent rust, care should be taken to dry the chair including parts that fit together such as the arm rest that slides into a mount on the frame. Regular cleaning is necessary to remove dirt, food, soiling and foreign material. This will keep the chair hygienic and attractive.

Lubrication

Little lubrication is required for a manual wheelchair. Armrest adjustments for height and removal may require occasional lubrication. A silicone-based lubricant is your best choice for lubrication.

Inflation (for wheelchairs with inflatable tires)

Inflation of tires should be checked weekly. Do not use a service station compressor as tires are easily over inflated causing them to burst. A bicycle pump provides adequate inflation and can be stored conveniently for immediate use. If you find that your brakes don't work well it may be an indication that your tires need to be inflated.

Transport

Take care when transporting your wheelchair that it is handled carefully when placed in a vehicle so that it is not dropped or banged up. Tie downs should be used in trucks to keep the chair from banging around. When loading your chair into the trunk of a car, check that there

is enough clearance as you close the trunk carefully. For wheelchairs with removable backs and bases, components should slide into place easily. If force is required to remove/replace parts, this is an indication for a vendor visit so that adjustments can be made to prevent ongoing damage.

General Tips

To handle sidewalk curbs the wheelchair should be tipped back onto the rear wheels and carefully lowered to the road surface to avoid impact and damage to footrests.

A well-maintained wheelchair provides mobility and better participation in life!

Only the one person should be riding in the wheelchair. Additional weight caused by "hitch hikers" can cause damage.

Flip foot plates out of the way when getting out of the chair; do not step on the foot plates as they are not built to withstand the stress.

Plastic coating on hand rims is fragile making it necessary to take care when moving through doorways, storing and transporting the wheelchair.



Occupational Therapy

Skills for the job of living.

Repairs

For any repairs to the wheelchair it is necessary to call the vendor, not the therapist. Regular yearly visits are suggested to your vendor for them to check bearings, brakes, arm pads, tires, hand rims, etc. Regular maintenance visits save money by catching problems before small problems get larger and more costly. For wheel chairs owned by the Alberta Aids to Daily Living Program (AADL) an annual amount of \$450 is granted for repairs (this is subject to the cost share agreement).

Finding an occupational therapist to help

Occupational therapy services for mobility-related problems can be accessed through many methods, including:

- Home Care or hospital programs through your regional health authority
- Extended health benefits with some insurers or as part of an insurance claim
- Veterans Affairs for eligible veterans
- Clients purchasing services directly from an occupational therapist

To find an occupational therapist go to our website at www.saot.ca and download the Private Practice Listing. Or for an occupational therapist employed by a regional health authority, phone Health Link, or go to the Inform Alberta website (www.informalberta.ca).



Occupational therapy assists you with the Skills for the job of living in caring for yourself and your family, in returning to work, and in resuming community activities.

For additional information of the benefits of occupational therapy and how it can assist you or someone you know, please contact:

info@saot.ca

www.saot.ca or www.otworks.com