



How to Get Around in a Wheelchair



This information is a general guideline. Please consult a healthcare provider for instructions specific to your situation.

Few would choose to use a wheelchair, but if you need one, no other device can give you more mobility and independence.

Instructions

Assure proper posture and comfort by sitting up straight, using all of the support provided by the wheelchair back and keeping your feet firmly on the pedals. Use a gel seat cushion or some form of heavy-duty seat protection.

Rotate the wheelchair on its axis for a quick turn by moving one wheel forward and the other in reverse.

Keep hands, elbows and knees inside the framework when moving in order to prevent being pinched between the wheelchair and another object.

Try moving in reverse through narrow turns in hallways and doorways if you can't get through them going forward.

Remove the front pedals to temporarily shorten the wheelchair length when trying to execute extremely tight turns. Use any leg strength you have to apply additional leverage for turning.

Lean slightly toward a door as you move through it. By letting the door rest against your shoulder, you'll keep it from rubbing against your pushing hand.

Plan your route before moving around the house or office.

Tips & Warnings

1. Remember that steep grades and other difficult maneuvers sometimes are more easily negotiated when moving backward. Consider wearing medical identification to make it clear why you use a wheelchair.
2. Carry a cell phone or a cordless telephone in your wheelchair.
3. An extendible reaching tool serves nicely to reach objects from high shelves.
4. Keep a poncho handy. Ponchos provide better rain protection than umbrellas.
5. Mini-backpacks or fanny packs provide handy carrying capacity for wheelchair users.
6. Ask a friend or family member to accompany you if you must venture outdoors during inclement weather.