

Occupational Therapy

A guide to using your manual wheelchair safely

Information for patients and their families



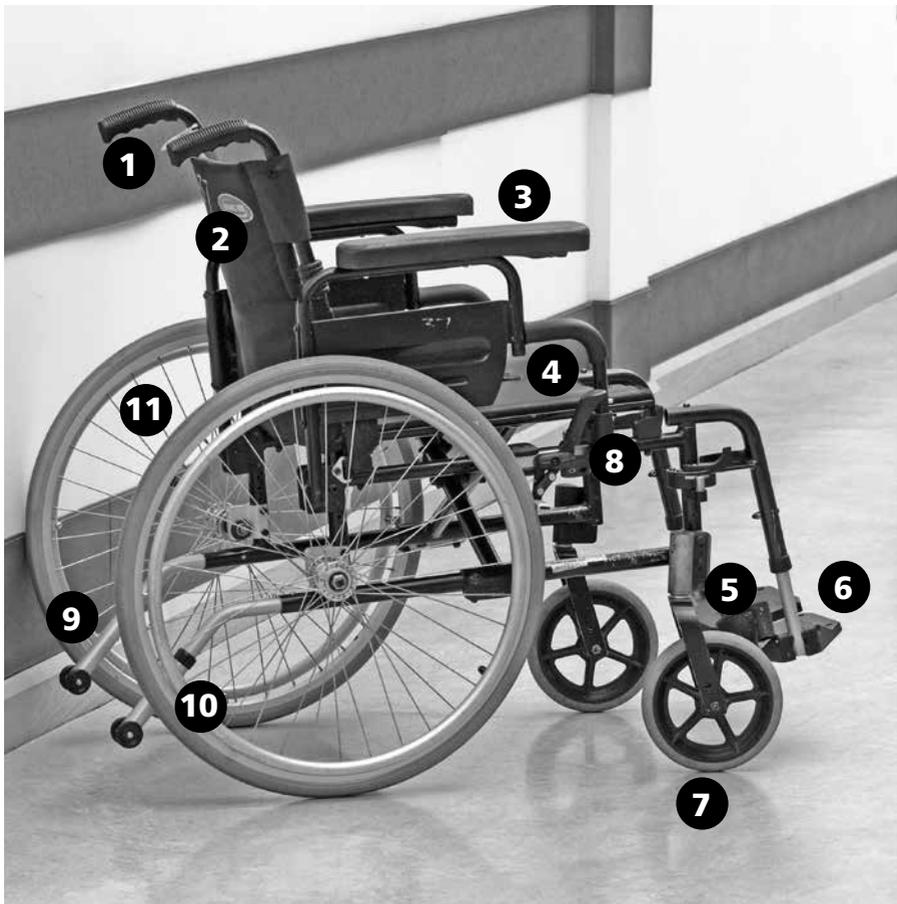
Introduction

As part of your care at the Oxford Centre for Enablement (OCE) you have been loaned a wheelchair to help you with your mobility for a short period of time.

This booklet describes how you can use the wheelchair safely indoors and outside. It is important that you read this booklet and follow the safety instructions with care. Incorrect use of your wheelchair can lead to accidents and injuries.

The Occupational Therapist will show you how to use your wheelchair safely, how to transport it and look after it. Please refer to this booklet whenever you need to. If you have any questions or concerns, or if your wheelchair is faulty, please contact us.

Your wheelchair



1. Pushing handles
2. Backrest
3. Armrest
4. Seat
5. Heel loops
6. Footplate
7. Front caster
8. Brake lever
9. Tipping lever
10. Hand rim
11. Rear self propelling wheel

Using the wheelchair

Opening the wheelchair

- Stand in front of the wheelchair.
- Push down and outward on the sides of the seat, keeping your fingers pointing inwards to prevent them getting trapped.
- Continue pushing downwards until the wheelchair is fully opened.
- Place the cushion on the seat, with the label saying 'back' at the rear of the seat.



Closing the wheelchair

- Lift the footplates up and remove the cushion.
- Stand beside the wheelchair, grasp the front and back of the seat canvas and pull upwards.

Never attempt to lift the wheelchair by any detachable parts (e.g. armrests). This may result in injury.



Getting into your wheelchair

- Make sure the brakes are on.
- Make sure the footplates are folded up or swung out of the way.
- Stand with your back to the chair and put your hands on the armrests.
- You can now lower yourself onto the seat, lower the footplates and place your feet comfortably against the heel loops.



Getting out of your wheelchair on your own

- Make sure the brakes are on.
- Make sure the footplates are folded up or swung out of the way.
- Make sure you have any walking aids you need nearby and that these are positioned correctly near to your bed or chair. (With advice from your therapist you may be transferring from your bed or chair in a different way e.g. from the side.)
- Place your hands on each armrest, lean slightly forwards and, with both feet on the floor, push into a standing position.

How to move the wheelchair yourself

- To move forward, release the brakes, hold the hand rims attached to the rear wheels and push forward.
- To move backwards, release the brakes, hold the hand rims attached to the rear wheels and pull back.
- To turn right, hold the right hand rim steady and push forward the left hand rim.
- To turn left, hold the left hand rim steady and push forward the right hand rim.
- Always check there are no obstacles in your way when turning.
- Many pavements and roads slope towards the kerb, causing the wheelchair to veer to one side. You will need to counteract this by steering the wheelchair in the opposite direction.
- Avoid uneven and soft ground. Always use dropped kerbs where available.
- Take additional care on wet, icy or slippery surfaces.
- Always put the brakes on when you stop.

Instructions for pushing the wheelchair

- Always make sure the brakes are on when the chair is not being pushed.
- Make sure your passenger's feet are safely on the footplates and elbows, all clothing, rugs or bags are tucked in safely.
- Look well ahead for possible hazards.
- Avoid steep, soft or uneven surfaces as these will make it harder to push or could cause the chair to tip over.
- Always let the person in the chair know what you are going to do, such as tilting them or turning quickly.
- Do not hang heavy bags or shopping on the handles of the chair. This can change the centre of gravity and cause the chair to tip backwards.

Getting down a kerb (with someone pushing the wheelchair)

- Going down a kerb backwards is recommended as it is safer and takes less effort.
- Take extreme care when stepping onto a road.
- Make sure the road is clear.
- Back the wheelchair to the edge of the pavement.
- Pull the rear wheels gently down onto the road surface.
- When the front castors are at the edge of the kerb pull on the handles and push one tipping lever with your foot to balance the passenger on the rear wheels. Pull the wheelchair further back into the road, and lower the front castors before turning to cross the road.



Getting up a kerb (with help of a carer)

- Push the wheelchair until the footplates are at the edge of the kerb.
- Hold the wheelchair handles firmly and tilt the chair backwards using the tipper lever until the back wheels touch the kerb. The front wheels should be placed on the path.
- Use the handles to lift and push the wheelchair forward.



Going down a steep slope (with the help of a carer)

It is safer if the wheelchair can be guided down a steep slope backwards by a carer.



Getting up and down stairs

Never attempt to use stairs, or to lift a chair with the passenger in it.

Escalators

Never attempt to use a wheelchair on an escalator either alone or with anyone helping.

Lifts

It is easier to go backwards into a lift so that you do not have to turn around in a confined space.

Transporting the wheelchair

Lifting a wheelchair into the boot of a car

- Remove the footbrakes. If the backrest is hinged, fold it down.
- Fold the wheelchair. Wheel it next to the car, parallel to the open boot. Apply the brakes.
- Grip either side of the fixed frame of the chair.
- Keeping your back straight, bending your hips and knees, lift the wheelchair vertically and balance it on the edge of the boot.
- Slide the wheelchair on its side into the boot. (You can protect the edge of the boot with a blanket.)



Transporting a wheelchair user in a vehicle

Only specially adapted vehicles with mounting points and security systems can be used to transport someone who is still in their wheelchair.

Important safety tips

It is important that you take note of these safety tips to make sure that you are safe when using your wheelchair.

Reaching and bending forwards

- Avoid leaning forwards (beyond the armrests).
- Avoid bending to reach low objects.
- Avoid reaching behind you over the top of the back rest.
- Never attempt 'wheelies'.



Brakes

You should always make sure that the brakes are applied when you are stationary.

Footrests

Never stand on the footplates. This could cause the wheelchair to tip forwards.



Remember that wheelchairs are quiet, so make sure others are aware of you.



Everyday obstacles

If you are using the wheelchair without help, you must:

- Avoid obstacles higher than 30mm (e.g. a low kerb), unless you have special anti tippers fitted to the wheelchair.
- Avoid going up or coming down gradients (slopes) greater than 1 in 11 (9%) which is a drop of more than 1 foot over 11 feet.
- To prevent your wheelchair tipping over, never go up or down slopes diagonally.
- When going uphill, bend your body forward and move the wheelchair forwards with quick short pushes to keep up momentum. If you need to rest, apply the brakes.
- When going downhill face the direction you are going in, lean backwards carefully and allow the hand rims to slowly slide through your hands. Be ready to check your speed and direction. Grasping the hand rim more firmly will stop the chair.

Safety straps

- Always securely fasten the lap strap or any safety harness supplied by your therapist.
- Observe weight limits. These will be labeled on the chair frame. Do not carry other adults, children or luggage in or on the wheelchair.

Maintenance

Your wheelchair was checked and regularly serviced before it was loaned to you.

It is important that you check the wheelchair once a week for any defects or damage. This is essential for your safety and to get the most effective use of your wheelchair.

1. Brakes

Check they are secure, properly adjusted and work correctly.

2. Wheels/Tyres

Check castors swivel freely. Check tyre pressures and tread. These are recorded on the side of the tyre. Adjust with bicycle pump if required. Use WD40 on bearings and bolts if required.

3. Upholstery/Frame

Check there are no tears to the back and seat canvases. The canvas and frame can be cleaned with warm soapy water.

4. Fixings

Check nuts/bolts for the footplates, armrests and any accessories you have been loaned.

If you are in any doubt about the safety of the wheelchair, or suspect a fault, please contact your Occupational Therapy Department (listed on the last page of this booklet). Do not attempt to repair the wheelchair yourself or modify any parts of the chair. This may make it unsafe to use.

Returning your wheelchair

Your wheelchair is on temporary loan from the Occupational Therapy Department at the Oxford Centre for Enablement. Please return the wheelchair on time, making sure that it is clean and in good condition, so that it can be given to another patient.

Many of our wheelchairs have been generously funded by local charities and the hospital League of Friends.

How to contact us

Please contact us if you:

- have any questions or concerns about your wheelchair
- are having any difficulties using it
- notice a fault that needs to be repaired
- have any concerns about its safety.

Oxford Centre for Enablement
Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre
Windmill Road
Headington
Oxford
OX3 7HE

Tel: 01865 737 392
(Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.00pm)

Website: www.ouh.nhs.uk/oce/

A reminder: Do not attempt to repair the wheelchair yourself or modify any parts of the chair. This may make it unsafe to use.

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

Authors: A guide to using your manual wheelchair safely
Claire Ireson - Head of OT Services
June 2015 by Lynda Pearce - Senior Occupational Therapist
Review: June 2018
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust
Oxford OX3 9DU
www.ouh.nhs.uk/information

