

# Wheelchair Maintenance Tips

## Tip #1: Know your Mobility Equipment

Nobody knows your equipment like you do. You know the exact fit, feel and sounds it makes. You can tell if it veers to the right or the left. You can tell when it makes a new or odd sound, no matter how quiet. You know what it can handle and what it can't.

If it starts to behave differently, check it out. Catching a problem early on will help prevent you from having a major problem later. Make sure your tires are full (if you have air tires). Try and clean your chair as often as possible. And if there is something you are unsure about...call us, we will be happy to help you figure your equipment out. That's what we are here for!

## Tip #2: Know your Surroundings: Avoid Stairs and Curbs

People have been known to accidently go down a set of stairs or a curb in unfamiliar environments

Going down stairs is not only extremely dangerous for the person in the chair but can be hard on your equipment if you are not expecting it. It can be pretty easy to pop a tube and put extra stress on your rims and spokes. It could also cause some serious damages to your frame. Some chairs are built for durability, some are not. Know which kind you have, and keep it maintained

## Tip #3: Know your Surroundings: Beware of Puddles and Debris

Going through puddles with your castors (manual chair users) is a great way to get rusty clogged bearings that squeak and make it difficult to push. If avoiding puddles is not an option, you can get ceramic bearings that last longer and do not rust. The best way to maintain your castors is to wipe them off after it has been in contact with rain, snow or sand.

Always scan the ground immediately in front of you to make sure to avoid the debris on the ground such as glass, dog poop, garbage etc. The debris gets picked up by your wheels and could pop a tire, or clog your castors. There are products for manual chairs to help avoid popping a tire that way (Ask our staff about quality options).

Even with the best equipment there is always a risk. For Power Chairs and Scooters (especially with air tires) the risk is there too. If you have regular or dual density foam tires the debris can gouge out bits of the foam making the tires uneven which is hard on your chair.

#### Tip #4: Say no to Cracks

You should inspect your equipment's frame for cracks, especially in areas that sustain significant stress, such as the cross-brace of a folding wheelchair and the caster housing. A crack can be a serious threat to safety and should be tended to immediately. The degree of repair depends on the location of the crack. A crack occurring at a junction point in the frame may be repaired via a simple welding procedure. On the other hand, the entire frame may need to be replaced.

Consult with the owner's manual to find out which parts of the wheelchair are covered by the manufacturer, how long the warranty is good for, and about the service policy. Wheelin' Mobility will be your advocate to help you go through the difficult and often frustrating process of warranty repairs.

#### Tip #5: Worn and Cracked Tires

Replace tires when the tread becomes worn, cracked, loose or when the side walls begin to bulge out when pumped with air. Check that wheel locks (brakes) are secured tightly to the frame and that they hold tires firmly in place and are easily activated. Make adjustments if they interfere with the tire while rolling as this can cause undue wear and tear.

#### Tip #6: Nuts & Bolts

Check no less than once a month for loose nuts and bolts. Do not substitute damaged nuts and bolts with those of alternative grades and configurations. For example, a number label on the head of the bolt signifies how strong it is - the higher the number the stronger the bolt. Only replace bolts with those of the same grade or strength rating. Also, do not replace a lag bolt (partly solid/partly threaded) with an all-threaded bolt (screw).

It is especially important to check out your chair if you felt/ heard/ saw something fell off of your chair.

#### Tip #7: Check Moving Parts

Manual Users should check once a month or so if legrests, footrests, armrests, and backrests can be released (if originally designed to do so!) and put back into

If you have any questions regarding these tips or your mobility device  
Contact the Wheelin' Mobility service department at:  
604-200-0119 ext 2 or [info@wheelinmobility.com](mailto:info@wheelinmobility.com)



place with ease. These parts wear down the easiest, so make sure to go easy on them and be aware if they need to be replaced.

It is no fun to have your backrest come off in public, requiring some ingenious problem solving to put it back on.

Power Chair and scooter users should also inspect any moving part that you use a lot, such as footrests, removable backs, tilt mechanisms, or adjustable armrests are likely to wear out sooner than other parts of the chair simply because they get more use. They will last longer if they are kept tightened and properly adjusted.

### Tip #8: Keep Lubricated

If you have a folding wheelchair, ensure that it opens and folds easily. The folding mechanism requires lubrication (consult with the owner's manual for the type of lubricant to use) at least one a year – more if you live in a humid or wet climate.

All pivot points on the chair need to be lubricated, such as where the front casters turn.

Good lubricants to use are ones that offer corrosion protection and are water resistant.

Ball bearings will also need lubrication. However, most manual wheelchairs have sealed bearings or wipers to discourage water and dirt from damaging them. Bearings require special care and should be serviced by a trained specialist.

### Tip #9: Don't forget your Axles

Quick-release axles allow quick removal of your wheels on manual chairs. These axles should slide through the axle housing smoothly and "click" into place, or if threaded (like a screw), should thread easily and latch properly. No squeaking, binding or excessive side-to-side motion should be present when rolling.

Keeping the axle housing clean of debris can help ensure that it functions properly. This area is highly susceptible to dirt and mud build-up and should be cleaned once a week for the active user or on a monthly basis otherwise. Remove wheels and wipe off the axles with a clean cloth that contains just a few drops of oil on it. Also, try and clean the axle housings and around the bearings.

If you have any questions regarding these tips or your mobility device  
Contact the Wheelin' Mobility service department at:  
604-200-0119 ext 2 or [info@wheelinmobility.com](mailto:info@wheelinmobility.com)

### Tip #10: Check Wheel Alignment

Check your wheel alignment monthly. If your wheelchair tends to veer to one side while coasting, it could very well be that your wheels are out of alignment or that your spokes have become loose or damaged.

Inspect your wheels weekly to ensure that spokes from the axle to the rim are intact, that rims are not bent and that your wheels are parallel to one another. A properly adjusted wheel may require the equipment and expertise of a specialist.

### Tip #11: The Wheels in Front

The front casters should be inspected and repaired every few months. There should be no wobbling of the caster wheel, no excessive play in the caster spindle, and the caster housing should be aligned vertically.

You can feel if there is something wrong when you wheel, but it is good to physically check if you sense a problem. Your chair will veer or squeak if things are not quite right.

### Tip #12: The Dreaded Flat Tire

A common problem encountered in all wheelchairs is the flat tire. Tires with pneumatic rubber tubes – as opposed to airless foam or solid inserts – require more maintenance. That's why it's important to learn how to change or repair a tube. Or have someone on hand who can help you.

If you are an active person who has frequent flats, patch it using a "patch kit" purchased from any local bike shop. The kits include several rubber circular patches that are either glued over the hole or are self-adhering (the easiest ones to use). This is an economical alternative to buying a new tube all the time, however this method should only be considered as a temporary repair.

### Tip #13: Air Pressure

Be sure you have the right pressure in your tubes as indicated on the side of the tire. Inflate the tube using a hand-pump (can be useful if away from home) or electric or regular bicycle pump. Make sure you have the right pump for the type of tubes you have.

Check tire pressure once a week or once every 2-3 weeks for high pressure tires. A quick check method is to pinch the outer walls of the tire. It should be firm. Under-inflated tires can make it more difficult to push and maneuver the chair,



cause the tires to wear faster, and prevent the wheel locks from seating properly against the wheel.

#### Tip #14: Get the Most out of your Battery Life

**Power Chair and Scooter users:** get the most out of your battery life by charging your battery regularly. Do not let the battery die because it reduces the life of the battery. Also be sure to keep it out of the sun for prolonged periods of time as your battery can overheat and die on you.

#### Tip #15: Keep Connected

Power Chair and Scooter users need to check electrical connections to make sure they are firmly in place, and are free of grime and corrosion. For instance, you might want to check to make sure all connections are tight after someone else has worked on your chair.

In the winter when the sidewalks are salted, you will need to clean the electrical connections on your chair more often to protect them from salt corrosion.

Buildup can be removed with a wire brush after removing the cable from the connection. Be sure to disconnect the power before working with any electrical connections. It is also best to stay away from the batteries and let us help you.

#### Tip #16: Crossed Wires

Power chair and scooter users stay safe. Do not risk any unintentional changes of wiring connections. A good chair design will color code the wires, and if you remove one you should note its color. Don't remove more than one connection at a time so that there will be no chance of replacing it in the wrong spot. Putting wires back incorrectly is quite dangerous. At the least you could damage the electrical system of the chair. At worst you could cause a short circuit which could burn you.

#### Tip #17: Keep it Clean

The one thing that all mobility equipment requires is to be kept clean. It is also often neglected. Set aside one day once a month to wash down your equipment. The best solution for manual chairs and all non electronic parts is a bucket of soapy water, a rag and an old toothbrush. Nothing cleans better or faster. For electronic parts use some wet wipes to carefully clean around wires and joysticks.

Clean equipment last longer and breaks down less. You are more likely to spot problem areas before they get out of control.

If you have any questions regarding these tips or your mobility device  
Contact the Wheelin' Mobility service department at:  
604-200-0119 ext 2 or [info@wheelinmobility.com](mailto:info@wheelinmobility.com)