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## Addenbrooke's Rehabilitation Clinic (ARC)

# Advice for wheelchair users

### Using your wheelchair

You will be given a handbook/user guide on your wheelchair. The person who delivers your wheelchair will give you some basic instructions on how the wheelchair works. The following is some very important advice that every wheelchair user and carer should read.

### Getting into a wheelchair

1. Make sure that both of the brakes are on and the front castors are swiveled forwards.
2. Fold up both footplates and swing them to the sides out of the way.
3. If possible get someone to hold the handles of the wheelchair so that it will not move.
4. With both hands on the front of the armrests, lower yourself onto the seat.
5. Swing the footrests to the front and fold down the footplates. Place your feet on the footplates with your heels resting in front of the heel loops.

### Getting up from a wheelchair

1. Back the wheelchair so that the front castors swivel forwards.
2. Make sure that both the brakes are on.
3. Fold up both footplates and swing them to the sides out of the way.
4. If possible get someone to hold the handles of the wheelchair so that it will not move.
5. Move forwards on the seat.
6. Place both feet firmly on the ground, slightly apart and with one further back.
7. Place both hands on the front of the armrests, lean forwards with your head and shoulders over your knees to give balance and then push yourself up.

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## Transferring sideways from your wheelchair

1. Place your wheelchair alongside the chair/toilet/bed etc that you are transferring to.
2. Back the wheelchair so that the front castors swivel forwards.
3. Make sure that both brakes are on.
4. Fold up both footplates and swing them to the sides out of the way.
5. If possible ask someone to hold the handles of the wheelchair so that it will not move.
6. Remove the armrest on the side you are transferring to.
7. Place one hand on the armrest and the other, palm down, on the surface you are transferring to.
8. Lean slightly forwards, push up and slide sideways across to the other surface.
9. If you cannot safely transfer you may need to consider using a transfer board. Your O/T may be able to help advise you about this.

## Kerbs

It is best to avoid kerbs whenever possible. Always try to use dropped kerbs or ramps. If you wish to negotiate kerbs unaided do not do it until you have had proper instructions. Ask your therapist, or an experienced wheelchair user, for help.

## Pushing an occupied wheelchair down a kerb

It is safer to go down a kerb backwards. It requires less strength and gives a gentler ride. Care needs to be taken though as you will be stepping backwards into the road.

1. Practice with an empty wheelchair first.
2. Always tell the person in the wheelchair what you are about to do.
3. Make sure the road is clear then back the wheelchair to the edge of the kerb.
4. Pull the rear wheels carefully down onto the road making sure that both wheels touch down at the same time.
5. When the front castors are at the edge of the kerb, pull back on the handles and at the same time push down and forwards on the tipping lever with your foot. This will balance the wheelchair and occupant on the rear wheels. **Do not tip the wheelchair back more than necessary.**

6. Carefully pull the wheelchair further back into the road and when the feet are clear of the kerb gently lower the front to the road.
7. Check that the road is clear before turning around and crossing.

## Pushing an occupied wheelchair up a kerb

It is safer to go up a kerb forwards. It requires less strength and gives a gentler ride.

1. Practice with an empty wheelchair first.
2. Always tell the person in the wheelchair what you are about to do.
3. When the occupant's feet are nearly touching the kerb, pull back on the handles and at the same time push down and forwards on the tipping lever with your foot. This will balance the wheelchair and occupant on the rear wheels.
4. When the front castors are just clear of the kerb, push the wheelchair forward until the castors rest on the pavement. **Do not tip the wheelchair back more than necessary.**
5. Push the wheelchair forward until the back wheels just touch the kerb and then lift up on the handles as you continue pushing forwards to place the rear wheels on the pavement. The occupant can help with this stage by pushing forward on the handrims.

## Carrying bags etc

**Never hang bags on the back of the wheelchair as this can make it unbalanced and liable to tip over backwards.**

## Footplate adjustment

Both the height and angle of the footplates are adjustable.

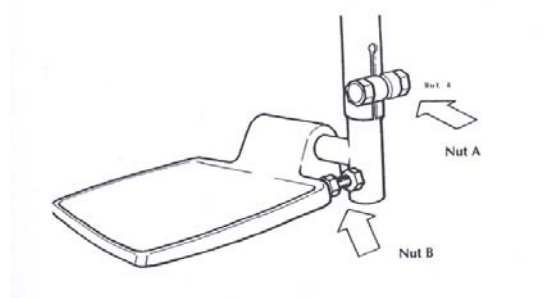
### Height adjustment

After sitting in the wheelchair, lower the footplate and ensure that it is in a comfortable position for your feet. The safest position is usually with your thighs horizontal, and hips and knees at right angles. If the position is not correct, loosen the nut (A), position the footplate at the correct height and then retighten the nut securely.

## Angle adjustment

The angle of the footplate can be adjusted by loosening nut (B) and adjusting the screw to move the angle up or down. Retighten the nut securely.

If you require any further advice please do not hesitate to contact our staff at ARC 9.



## Looking after your wheelchair

### Cleaning

The entire chair can be cleaned with a cloth dampened with tepid soapy water. Rinse off with clean water before drying.

When cleaning the upholstery, work in the **direction of the texture**. If the dirt is ingrained the surface should be scrubbed with a soft brush, again in the **direction of the texture**. If need be, a mild antiseptic can be applied to the fabric.

**Do not use:** Chemical bleaching materials, abrasive cleaners, wax polish or aerosol polishes.



### Tyres

All tyres should be regularly checked for sharp objects, glass, stones, etc.

Inflatable tyres must be maintained at the correct pressure. The manufacturer's will normally show this on the sidewall of the tyre (if you have any queries please contact your approved repairer). A normal bicycle pump is used for this.

**Tyres that are under-inflated can cause the brakes to cease working.**

## General

Periodically check your wheelchair to make sure it is working properly. Things to look for include: there are no loose nuts and bolts, moving parts are free and not stiff, brakes are working correctly and the hand grips are securely in place. **If you find any faults, contact the approved repairers or the wheelchair office immediately.**

## Notes

Name: . . . . .

Ref. No: . . . . .

**The telephone number of our clinic is: 01223 217859.**



We are currently working towards a smoke-free site. Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking areas.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS Stop Smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169

## Help with this leaflet:



If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or

[patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)



## Document history

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