



# Understanding your Manual Wheelchair

## Basic Patient Education

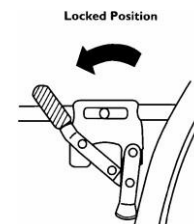


**Purpose:** Wheelchairs are designed to allow individuals who either cannot walk or have limited mobility to be independent and mobile. Wheelchairs come in different shapes, sizes, and weight capacities. Make sure that the wheelchair you have is weight appropriate and is set-up comfortably for your daily activities. Your manual wheelchair may have the following features:

- Standard Foot Rests or Elevated Leg Rests are add-on extensions that support the lower extremities; they are for support only and are not designed to support the weight of the user. Both of these types will swing away from the wheelchair to allow easier patient transfers into and out of the wheelchair. This also allows for a more compact size when transporting the wheelchair.
- Full Armrests or Desk Style Armrests are designed to provide a resting place for upper extremities and are not designed to support the full weight of the user. Desk Style armrests allow the user to get closer to a table for eating or reading. Both styles are detachable to allow a patient to transfer on a transfer board.

### How to Operate Your Manual Wheelchair

- **Folding and unfolding the wheelchair:** To fold, simply grasp the center edge of the seat upholstery (front and back edge) and lift up. To unfold, push down on both side rails of the seat upholstery until the seat is locked out flat. Be careful not to pinch fingers between the rails and armrests.
- **Applying the wheel locks:** Push forward on the brake lever (or pull back on the pull to lock type) until the brake is fully depressed against the wheel. Do NOT attempt to enter or exit the wheelchair without having the locks securely engaged.
- **Attaching the foot rests:** Locate the two small posts on the front frame of the wheelchair by the wheels. Line up the bracket holes at the top of the foot rests then slide the foot rest down over the posts. Swing the leg rests inward and lock the release mechanism in place.
- **Removing the foot rests:** Activate the release mechanism and swing the foot rests around the side of the wheelchair. While in this swing away position, lift up to remove completely from the chair.
- **Foot rest length adjustment:** The position of the foot plate on either standard footrests or elevating leg rests is adjustable to fit the user's leg length. The foot plate should be adjusted to support the weight of the user's foot and lower leg in such a position that permits weight bearing by the thighs.
- **Elevating leg rest adjustment:** If the wheelchair is equipped with elevating leg rests, the legs of the user can be elevated by simply lifting the leg rests up to the desired position. To lower them, support the leg rest with one hand while activation the elevation release mechanism with the other hand and lower the leg rest to the desired position.





- **Transportation:** You can transport your wheelchair by collapsing it, or folding it up and removing the foot rests. Then it can be rolled into a back seat of a car by tilting the wheelchair on its large wheels and placing the smaller caster wheels in the vehicle. Then roll up the larger wheels up into the back seat. Storage in automobile trunks or the storage area of a SUV is also accessible, but the user must always utilize proper lifting techniques when lifting heavy objects. If you are unable to lift the manual wheelchair, there are wheelchair lifts that will attach to most vehicles.



#### Safety Considerations:

- Wheel locks are not designed to be used as brakes.
- Know the maximum user weight for your wheelchair.
- Always engage wheel locks when transferring in or out of the chair.
- Never step on footplates. The chair will tip forward and could cause injury.
- Always remove or swing away front riggings when transferring in or out of the wheelchair.
- Avoid or use caution on wet, slippery, or uneven surfaces.
- Do not ride escalators in a wheelchair, instead use the elevator.
- Do not reach beyond the seat area because you could lose your balance and your wheelchair could tip over.
- Do not operate the wheelchair on roads, streets, or highways.
- Use only parts and accessories authorized by the wheelchair manufacturer.
- Never carry passengers on your wheelchair.
- Never leave your manual wheelchair outside in adverse conditions. Always store in a dry place.

The basic information given in this handout does not replace the manufacturer's suggested use guidelines. For more information go to <http://therapysupport.com/info> for the complete owner's manual. Please contact Therapy Support @ 877-885-HEAL for any questions, service, or repairs.