

What to Expect at your Wheelchair Evaluation and Assessment: Your Medical Equipment Supplier

The supplier works closely with you and the clinician to decide what equipment is best for you based on the evaluation. Together, the clinician and supplier will also look at your accessibility needs to ensure that the recommended equipment will work in your specific environment (e.g., home, work, school, vehicle, church, etc.) and will maximize your independence.

Therapist and supplier should assess the following areas together

Features for both Manual and Power Wheelchairs

- **Seat width and depth**
If the chair is too big or too small it will be difficult to use and uncomfortable.
- **Pelvic (hip) position and support**
If your hips are not positioned well, it might be hard to use your arms and it could make you tired. Basically, your hips are your base of support when you are sitting, it is important to know what the best position is for you to be as independent as possible.
- **Cushion**
A VERY important part of the wheelchair! You need to feel stable and have a cushion that will decrease the possibility of a pressure sore. Ideally, the clinic will pressure map you sitting on the cushion.
- **Leg support**
Footrest angle, leg rest length, foot support (strap?) – it is important your feet are aligned well so you have as much support to sit up as well as possible. You can what feels most supportive.
- **Appropriate trunk support**
The back support of the wheelchair will help you stay upright and increase your endurance. Just like a good seat in a car, if it is comfortable and you are able to move as freely as possible and have the support you need, you can drive longer and be more alert.
 - **Back support**
 - You might want a low back or a high back. A low back will give you more room to move your arms, but has less back support. A high back will provide more support, but might limit your arm movement.
 - **Chest support**
 - Lateral supports (supports the side of your chest) or chest strap (a strap on your chest if you are worried you will fall forward). These features help you keep your balance when leaning forward, or to the side.
 - **Headrest**
 - You might want a head support if you feel it gives you the necessary support while driving your chair or if your wheelchair seat is able to tilt back.
 - **Hip Guides**
 - These pads, located on the outside of your legs to provide support by keeping your knees from widening.

Specific Considerations for Manual Wheelchairs

To learn more about Manual Wheelchairs visit the materials in the Mobility Map in [chapter 9](#).

- **Wheel position**
 - Like a car, a wheelchair with a shorter wheelbase might be more maneuverable, but might also be less stable (tippy). And, if you sit lower to the ground, like a sports car, you are more stable, but you are also shorter.
- **Weight of the actual wheelchair**
 - A lightweight wheelchair is easier to push and can be easier to put in a car.
- **Seat back**
 - A shorter back allows you to have more movement, but does not provide as much support. A low back will give you more room to move your arms, but has less back support. A high back will provide more support, but might limit your arm movement.
- **Pressure Relief**
 - Be sure you have a pressure relief plan/schedule, or the ability to achieve pressure relief using a method planned in advance. For example: leaning forward, lifting yourself up with your arms, standing, leaning to one side.

Specific Considerations for Power Wheelchairs

- **Joystick or specialty controls**
 - Be sure you can control the chair with your hand using a Joystick or with specialty controls that can be located anywhere you have consistent body movement (head, mouth, foot).
- **Operate the chair in any position**
 - Be sure you can operate the chair in any position (tilt, recline, standing).
- **Know power options**
 - Be sure you know how to use the different power options (tilt, recline, seat elevation, elevating leg-rests, standing).
- **Have a pressure relief plan**
 - Be sure you have a Pressure Relief plan (ability to achieve pressure relief using planned method). For example: leaning forward, tilting the seat back, lifting yourself up with your arms, standing, leaning to one side.