



ADVICE

Falls Prevention Tips Number Five

A guide to the safe use of wheelchairs

- Is the wheelchair used safely?
- Do the brakes work?
- Is the wheelchair in a safe condition?

Has the wheelchair been correctly unfolded before use?

- ▶ Make sure the wheelchair is correctly opened and the seat is in the correct position. Some wheelchairs have catches to ensure this is done.

Is it safe to get in and out of the wheelchair?

- ▶ Ensure both brakes are on
- ▶ Swing the foot plates out of the way
- ▶ Use the armrests for leverage
- ▶ Make sure the wheelchair is as close as possible to where you are moving to

Is the lap belt always used?

- ▶ Always use the lap belt to ensure maximum safety

Are the foot plates (sometimes called hangers) being used properly?

- ▶ Always make sure the foot plates are down when the wheelchair is moving
- ▶ Some foot plates only flip up, but always swing them out of the way when getting in and out if you can.

Is a cushion used on the seat?

- ▶ Sitting on a cushion helps to keep you warm

Is the wheelchair in good mechanical order?

- ▶ Make sure the brakes work
- ▶ Check that the tyres are pumped up
- ▶ Check that the seat and back canvas are in good repair
- ▶ Repairs to NHS wheelchairs can be done by the Approved Repairer but this does not include pumping up tyres.

Is the wheelchair suitable for the user?

- ▶ If the wheelchair was not originally issued to you, it might not be suitable.
- ▶ If your personal condition has changed e.g. gained or lost weight or there has been a change in your medical condition, then contact the Wheelchair Services to discuss any changes to your wheelchair that might be necessary.

Wheelchair repair:

- ▶ For NHS issued wheelchairs contact
- ▶ Millbrook:
0870 060 1471 (complex and specialist equipment)
0870 060 1470 (basic wheelchairs only)

Further information

For more information about how to avoid a fall, go to: www.ageuk.org.uk and search Staying Steady.

If you have any concerns or need advice about accessing NHS services, you can enquire in confidence on 01525 864405 or enquiries@bedfordshireccg.nhs.uk.

Leaflets available in this series:

1. A guide to what to do if you have a fall
2. A guide to safe footwear
3. A guide to safe transfers on/off chairs and bed
4. A guide to the safe use of walking aids
5. A guide to the safe use of wheelchairs
6. A guide to reducing the risk of falls due to medication
7. A guide to diet and nutrition
8. A guide to keeping warm

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