



Self-propelled wheelchair

General guide and safety information



Your mobility aids service

The British Red Cross are part of a global humanitarian network, responding to conflicts, natural disasters and individual emergencies, helping people in times of crisis, providing a range of services in your local community. All our services are delivered by skilled volunteers and staff.

Having the right medical equipment at the right time can make a great deal of difference.

Who is the service for?

The British Red Cross mobility aids loan service aims to help people who require medical equipment on a short term loan basis, typically for a six to eight week period. This service is provided free of charge, although we would ask for a donation towards our running costs.

Equipment available to loan

- Wheelchairs and ancillary equipment
- Toileting Aids

A small range of Independent Living Products are available to purchase in our local facilities, Disability Living Centres and from our online shop at **redcross.org.uk**.

Contact us

For more information, visit **redcross.org.uk/wheelchairs** or call us on **0300 456 1914**.

Self-propelled wheelchair

General guide and safety information

For maximum safety, these operations should be carried out with the help of an attendant. The occupant should always try to assist the attendant wherever possible to share the total effort.



Opening the wheelchair

Stand in front of the chair. Push down on the sides of the seat canvas with your hands pointing inwards until the chair is fully opened. Never put your fingers between the frame and the seat.

Brakes

Hand brakes are provided for preventing wheel movement when parked, particularly on a slope, or during occupant transfer to and from the wheelchair. To apply the brakes push the brake lever forward.

Getting in and out of the wheelchair

Carers should not attempt to lift without help. If this is not possible a hoist may be required.

Getting into the wheelchair

Make sure that the brakes are on, flip up the footrests taking care that the heel support straps (if fitted) are not jammed against the footrest support frame. On some models, footrests may be swung away for easier access.

The occupant may be able to help getting into the chair by pushing on the armrests to provide support whilst being lowered into the seat. Finally, push the footrests down, and locate the occupant's feet on them.

Getting out of the wheelchair

Make sure that the brakes are on, then flip up the footrests. The occupant should place a hand on each armrest, bend slightly forward and place both feet well back and firmly on the ground, then push upwards to assist the carer.

Getting around

Before setting off make sure that you are comfortable and that clothes, rugs, covers etc. do not catch in the wheels or interfere with the general workings of the wheelchair.

- To go forward, release the brakes, grasp the hand rims and push forward.
- To go backward, pull the hand rims backwards.
- To turn right, hold the right hand rim steady and push the left hand rim forward.
- To turn left, hold the left hand rim steady and push the right hand rim forward.
- To make a tight turn, you need to move the wheels in opposite directions. For instance, to make a tight turn to the left, push the right hand rim forward and pull the left hand rim backwards.
- To go through a narrow doorway without hurting your hands, pull on the sides of the doorframe to propel the wheelchair forward.
- Be very careful when going up or down kerbs, ramps or slopes. If there is a dropped kerb or pedestrian crossing, use

it. Be aware of how much you can do and ask for help if you are in any doubt.

Shopping bags or other additional heavy loads should not be carried in a wheelchair unless specifically designed for the purpose.

This particularly applies to hanging items over the push handles, which can overload the chair and affect stability resulting in injury if the occupant were to tip out of the chair.

Getting up and down kerbs

Please note:

If your chair does not have anti-tips then extra precautions need to be taken when going up and down kerbs.

Getting up and down kerbs and small steps can be dangerous. Always look for a ramp first.

Assuming you have an attendant: (if you do not have an attendant we recommend that you always find a dropped kerb or ramp).

Accessing the kerb

Look for dropped kerbs and ramps. If there is no other way, keep control of the wheelchair at all times and remember the person's safety and comfort.

Getting up a kerb

1. Ask the user if they are prepared to go up the kerb.
2. Position the wheelchair so that the front wheels almost touch the kerb. Tell the person you are about to tip her/him.
3. Grip the handles firmly and put one foot on the tipping lever.
4. Push down and forward on the tipping lever and pull the handles toward you, balancing the wheelchair on its back wheels.
5. Push the wheelchair forward until both front wheels are over the pavement. Gently lower the front wheels onto the pavement and roll the wheelchair forward.
6. When the back wheels touch the kerb, carefully push the wheelchair onto the pavement, keeping the wheels in constant contact with the kerb. Never lift the back wheels off the ground

Getting down a kerb

1. Position the wheelchair so that the front wheels face the kerb squarely.
2. Put one foot on the tipping lever and grip the handles firmly.
3. Push down on the tipping lever and handles.
4. Balance the wheelchair on its back wheels and move it forward.

5. Slide the back wheels down the kerb, while supporting some of the wheelchair's weight yourself. Keep the front wheels up.

6. Make sure both back wheels touch the ground gently and at the same time. Then, gently lower the front wheels.

Lowering the wheelchair backwards

Taking the wheelchair down backwards may be easier for heavier users and older helpers. But take extra care.

- Keep a look out for traffic if you are coming down backwards into a road.
- Check that the road is clear before turning the wheelchair around and crossing.

Some safety tips:

Do not bump into the kerb and jar the user. Do not hit the user's feet on the kerb. Never tip the wheelchair forward. Tip it back for as short a time as possible. Keep your hands firmly on the handles.

Using a wheelchair – dos and don'ts

DO

- Apply both brakes before getting in or out.
- Use dropped kerbs when available.
- An attendant should use tipping levers as well as push handles when negotiating kerbs.
- Pick up the wheelchair by its frame.
- Ensure the lap strap is fastened if not in use.

DON'T

- Pick up the wheelchair by the arm rests.
- Carry bags suspended from push handles.
- Stand on footplates to get in or out of the wheelchair.
- Use the brakes to stop a moving chair.

Please note:

If your wheelchair is fitted with anti-tips these may protrude beyond the frame of the chair, and therefore could be a trip hazard.

Weather and terrain

When there is snow or ice on the ground controlling the wheelchair will take significantly more effort and the attendant or user must take this into account to ensure they are capable of managing safely in these conditions.

Handling and stability on steps and slopes

Ensure that push handle locks are engaged before use.

An important factor in considering accessibility and slopes is the effort demanded from the attendant using the chair. Pushing up a steep slope, which extends over a distance, may create a need to stop and rest, which in turn demands additional and undesirable effort to start back upwards again.

Stopping a wheelchair on a steep downward slope also demands effort and control, and surface conditions need to be taken into account when deciding what outdoor route to take. Manoeuvres, which demand over exertion, may create risk of injury to the user and should be avoided.

Where possible, the hazard of negotiating steps should be avoided. Many falls and injuries

to both occupant and helper can occur when inexperienced people are carrying out this operation.

In the event of the chair having detachable pushing handles, these should be checked for security in the locked in position before attempting the manoeuvre. Two attendants at least are required for this operation. The attendant supporting the main load should grip the chair at the push handles, and repeat the procedure for getting down a kerb at each step on pages 5-6 of this leaflet. The second attendant at the front will be required to guide the footrest area, and provide reassurance to the occupant. A third person could act as guide for the chair team if the steps are high.

Reverse this procedure for going up a flight of steps, with the attendant supporting the main load at the push handles pulling, and the second attendant at the front guiding the chair using the corner of each side frame.

Please note:

It is the responsibility of the user and the attendant to ensure that they take account of all weather and terrain conditions when planning the journey, and that the wheelchair is used in accordance with this guidance at all times.

It is important to return your equipment on the agreed date, or to contact your local office to arrange an extension. This means the equipment will always be available for someone else to use when they need it.

**Pressure reducing foam cushions**

If you have a cushion with your wheelchair, to keep it clean, wipe down with warm, soapy water and allow to dry naturally. DO NOT use solvent or alcohol-based cleansers.

Would you like to volunteer for the British Red Cross?

Do you have free time? Are you able to support our Mobility Aids Service?

We offer the chance for you to work with people to make a real difference to their lives. There is comprehensive free training so you can represent the Red Cross with confidence and it's a great opportunity to develop your existing skills and to gain new ones.

You will enjoy the company of a warm and friendly team and we reimburse any reasonable out-of-pocket expenses when on duty.

Our volunteer tasks include:

- Demonstrating how to use and look after our wheelchairs and other items of equipment
- Dealing with telephone queries, completing paperwork and adding orders to our online stock management system
- Receiving and recording donations
- Being a home delivery driver.

If you would like to become a volunteer for the mobility aids service or you would like to know more, please contact your local office identified on the front of this booklet, or search for volunteering opportunities at redcross.org.uk/volunteering.



Photo © Matthew Percival.



Photo © Matthew Percival.



Photo © John Eccles.

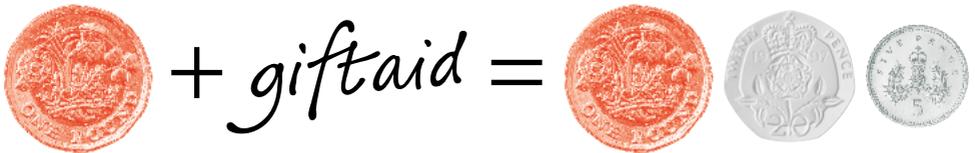
Support our service and help others

This service would not be here without your support.

Donate today to help others who need to borrow equipment

If you are able to, any donation is very much appreciated and helps us to continue to support others who may need a wheelchair or other equipment. It costs on average £10 per week to make a wheelchair available through our service.

If you are a UK taxpayer please don't forget to add gift aid to your donation.



Last year, if everyone had added gift aid to their donation we could have provided another 1,000 new wheelchairs.

Card payments accepted.