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PATIENT GUIDE IN THE USE OF A WHEELCHAIR

OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Folding and unfolding the wheelchair:** To fold, simply lift up under the center edge of the seat upholstery. To unfold, tilt the chair slightly to one side to raise the wheels on the opposite side of the floor. Then press down on one or both seat rails.
- 2. Applying the wheel locks:** Push forward on the lock tips, (or pull back on the pull to lock type), until the locks snap into the locked position. Do not attempt to enter or exit the wheelchair without having the locks securely engaged.
- 3. Folding the footplates up into a vertical position:** If the footplates are equipped with heel loops, these must first be pulled forward over the rear of the foot plates. The footplates themselves can then be folded up into the vertical position by lifting up on the inside edges of the footplates.
- 4. Releasing and swinging away the front rigging:** Whether the wheelchair is equipped with standard footrests or elevating legrests, this procedure permits the user to make much closer approaches for easier, safer transfers to beds, toilets, automobiles, etc. Simply activate the release mechanism and swing the front rigging around to the side of the wheelchair. While in this swing away position, the front rigging can also be removed from the chair entirely, by simply lifting it off. This removal will make lifting the chair or loading into a car much easier for the caregiver. From the swing away position, the front rigging can be returned to the standard position by simply swinging it back to the front of the wheelchair. It will lock automatically in the forward position. If the front rigging has been removed from the chair, simply replace it in the swing away position, then swing it back to the standard front position when required.
- 5. Elevating legrest adjustment:** If the wheelchair is equipped with elevating legrests, the user's legs can be elevated by simply lifting the legrests up to the desired position. To lower them, support the legrest with one hand while activating the elevation release mechanism with the other, and lower to the desired position.
- 6. Footrest length adjustment:** The position of the footplate on either standard footrests or elevating legrests is adjustable to fit the user's leg length. The footplate 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. A footrest adjustment that is too long will result in a line of pressure under the thigh, at the front edge of the seat upholstery. An adjustment that is too short will raise the user's knees and cause excessive weight to be born by the buttocks. Either situation increases the risk of pressure sores. The knees and hips of the user should be at approximately the same level. The lowest edge of the footplate must be at least two inches above the floor to provide safe clearance when negotiating ramps or inclines. The adjustment is made by loosening the adjustment bolt with a wrench, and telescoping the footplate in or out to achieve the desired position, then retightening the bolt securely.
- 7. Removing and replacing detachable arms:** This feature permits lateral or sliding transfers to and from the side of the wheelchair, for those users who are unable to stand briefly to transfer. Release the arm lock on the front receiver socket and lift the arm from the center to avoid binding. To replace the arm simply reverse the procedure. Attention to the location of the rear receiver socket will make replacing the arm easier.

Wheelchairs equipped with desk length detachable arms permit closer approaches to tables or desks. If it is occasionally desirable to have arm supports farther forward on these models, this is easily accomplished by swapping sides and reversing the desk length arms. Please Note: Reversing the arms without swapping sides will narrow the distance between the arms and could result in an accident. Wheelchairs with wrap-around or space-saver style arms cannot be reversed.

8. **Use of the tipping levers:** Assistance by a caregiver or attendant to negotiate curbs and other small level changes can be accomplished by the use of the tipping levers that extend from the bottom rear of the wheelchair frame, just inside the large rear wheels. The attendant should apply pressure downward with one foot on the end of one tipping lever while pressing down on the push handles of the wheelchair. This technique makes this procedure much easier and safer.

9. **Special Features:** The driver/technician delivering your wheelchair will demonstrate the above basic operating procedures as well as any other special features or extra accessories that were ordered on the chair. These might include such things as: seat positioning or safety belts, grade aids or hill holders, anti-tipping devices, wheelchair tray, hemi or low seat frame, reclining back, and many others. Some of these accessories are provided for your safety, and the wheelchair should not be used without them in the correct functioning position.

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

The user or caregiver should perform the following basic safety checks on the wheelchair at frequent intervals.

1. Check hand grips and the rubber tips on the tipping levers to ensure that they are tight and secure.
2. Check the locks for proper adjustment to confirm that they lock the large wheels securely when engaged.
3. Look over all nuts, bolts and attaching hardware for proper tightness.
4. If the wheelchair is equipped with pneumatic tires, check for proper tire pressure.
5. Check for proper footrest length adjustment.

If the user's physical condition or body weight changes significantly, check with your physician or therapist to confirm that the present wheelchair is still appropriate.

Remember to engage the wheelchair locks before transferring to or from the chair.

Avoid developing pressure sores from prolonged sitting by frequently practicing some type of weight shift. Do "push-ups" by pressing down on the armrests to lift the buttocks off the seat, or shift weight by leaning first to one side then the other.

Do not lean forward in the wheelchair unless both feet are flat on the floor. This is particularly important for users with heavy leg casts using elevating legrests.

Becoming familiar with the wheelchair and following the above guidelines should increase the user's mobility, comfort, and functional independence. Please call Cape Medical Supply if we can be of further service.