

**St Margaret's**  
Hospice Care

## Assisting a wheelchair user

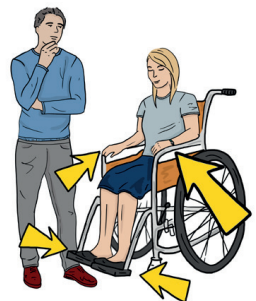
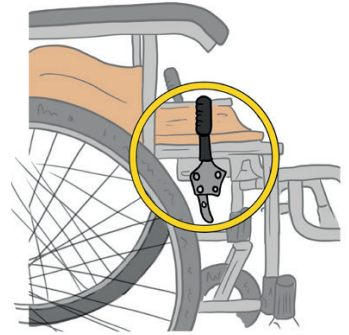


## Introduction

This leaflet is designed to help you when assisting a wheelchair user. It is not designed to replace information given by your wheelchair provider or Physiotherapist/Occupational Therapist, but will hopefully be a useful supplement.

## Safety and comfort

- The wheelchair user should always use the cushion provided
- Always make sure the brakes are on when the chair is not moving
- The lap strap should always be fastened around the user when the chair is moving
- Footrests should always be used when moving someone in a chair. Make sure they are securely fixed
- Swing the footrests to the side or hinge them upwards when the user is getting in and out
- Never allow the user to stand on the footrests, the chair will tip forward
- Keep clothes, bags and rugs well away from the wheels
- Check the user's feet cannot be caught by the castors when you are turning the wheelchair
- Ensure the wheelchair user is ready to be moved and has their hands inside the arms of the chair and their feet on the footplate. Particularly check that their fingers cannot be caught in the wheels



- Never hang heavy bags on the handle, the extra weight could tip the chair over backwards
- When out and about be aware of uneven ground, slopes, pedestrians and other hazards
- Never over tip the wheelchair. The chair could over balance backwards



## Your safety

Pushing a wheelchair incorrectly can cause strain or injury to you.

It is important to maintain a good posture:

- Keep close to the wheelchair. Leave just enough space to be able to step forward and to be able to turn the chair
- Keep your back in an upright position. Bend your elbows and try not to bend forward from the waist or stoop over
- Always use both hands
- Let your body weight do the work, don't strain your arms, back or shoulders
- Move smoothly and steadily, avoiding quick or strenuous movements

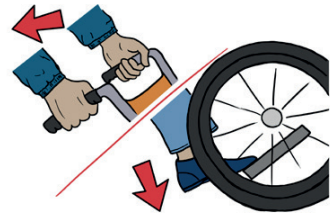
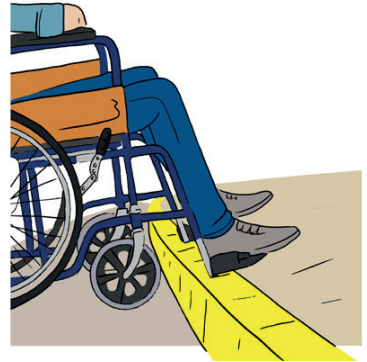


It is hard both pushing someone up a slope or hill, and controlling the chair when coming down. Never attempt this unless you are confident and capable.

## Getting UP a kerb or small step

Look out for dropped kerbs or ramps. Even though you may need to go a little further, kerbs and steps are best avoided if possible. If there is no alternative:

- Check the wheelchair user is ready to go up the kerb or step
- Position the wheelchair as closely as possible to the kerb, the wheels should almost touch
- Grip the handles firmly and put one foot on the tipping lever
- Push down and forwards on the tipping lever and pull the handles towards you, balancing the chair on its back wheels
- Push the chair forwards until both of the front wheels are over the pavement. Lower the wheels onto the pavement and roll the wheelchair forwards
- When the back wheels touch the kerb gently push the wheelchair forwards onto the pavement, keeping the wheels in contact with the kerb. Never lift the back wheels off the ground



## Getting DOWN a kerb or small step

Again, look out for dropped kerbs or ramps. If there is no alternative:

- Position the wheelchair so that the front wheels face the kerb squarely
- Put one foot on the tipping lever and grip the handles firmly
- Push down on the tipping lever and handles
- Balance the wheelchair on its back wheels and move it forward
- Slide the back wheels down the kerb, keeping the front wheels up
- Make sure both back wheels are firmly on the ground then lower the front wheels



Taking the chair down backwards may be easier if the user is heavier or the person pushing the chair is less able.



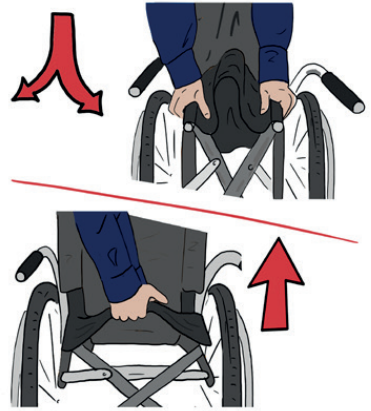
## Safety tips

- Take care not to bump into the kerb and jar the user or hit their feet on the kerb
- Never tip the chair forwards and only tip backwards for as short a time as possible
- Stay close to the chair and keep your hands firmly on the handles at all times

# Unfolding, folding and lifting the chair

## Unfolding

- Stand in front of the chair. Push down with your palms on the side edges of the seat until the chair is completely open
- Take care not to trap your fingers between the frame and the seat



## Folding

- Turn the footrests upright and turn them out or remove them
- Remove the cushion
- Stand beside the chair, hold the middle of the seat fabric at the front and back and pull upwards

## Lifting

- Avoid lifting the chair unless necessary. If the back seats of your car move it may be possible to push the chair into the back foot well in the same way as going up a step
- Apply the brakes when lifting the chair to prevent wheelspin
- Remove the footrests and any other removable parts before lifting the wheelchair. The back may fold down to make the chair more compact
- Use a rug or similar to protect the paintwork of your car when lifting it into the boot. Always lift with a straight back, bend your knees and use your leg muscles to lift

## Maintenance

- Keep the chair dry. Wipe away wet leaves, mud, dirt or spilled food or drink with a damp cloth before drying it
- Use mild soap and warm water to keep the fabric clean, not furniture polish or spirits
- Please do not do any repairs yourself

## Any questions?

- If the wheelchair user or you have any questions, please contact your wheelchair supplier or your Physiotherapist or Occupational Therapist

## Feedback - we welcome your compliments and complaints

We are keen to develop and improve our services and welcome positive and negative feedback, including any concerns you may have. You can:

- Speak to any member of the team either in person or over the phone by calling our 24-hour advice line on **01823 333822** or **01935 709480**
- Email us at **[feedback@st-margarets-hospice.org.uk](mailto:feedback@st-margarets-hospice.org.uk)** or through our website.

**St Margaret's Hospice Care Taunton Hospice,**

Heron Drive, Bishops Hull, Taunton, TA1 5HA

 01823 333822

**St Margaret's Hospice Care Yeovil Hospice,**

Little Tarrat Lane, Yeovil, BA20 2HU

 01935 709480

 [CRC@st-margarets-hospice.org.uk](mailto:CRC@st-margarets-hospice.org.uk)

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Please note all incoming and outgoing calls may be recorded for training and quality purposes.

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