

This TelAbility handout provides an overview of routine wheelchair maintenance to keep chairs in good working order for both standard and motorized chairs.

Wheelchairs are very much like any other vehicle in that they need to have regular maintenance to extend their lives. Sometimes this maintenance has to be done by outside experts, but there are some things that can be done at home that can prolong the usefulness of the chair and reduce the overall repair costs.

One of the most important things to do is read the owner's manual very carefully after the purchase of the wheelchair. This can be a critical source for information on the assembly of the chair, how to take care of the wheelchair, and the extent of any warranty that comes with the chair. The manual should be kept in a safe place for future reference.

Some of the basic maintenance requires the use of several different kinds of tools. Some of the essential items are: an adjustable wrench, a spoke wrench, a set of Allen wrenches, a flat and Phillips head screwdriver, and a tire repair kit. It is a good idea to carry these essentials in a container that can accompany the wheelchair in case of an emergency.

There are many factors that determine how often your maintenance routine should be performed. Wheelchair type, climate, environment, and the demand put on the wheelchair will all dictate how often the chair needs service. What follows is a list of suggested maintenance that can be done at home. Though this list can help to maintain your child's wheelchair, it is still highly recommended that the chair be taken periodically to an authorized service center for a routine check-up.

Daily

- Wipe the chair down with a damp cloth.

Weekly

- Check the tire pressure.
- Check that wheel locks/brakes are easy to activate and secured tightly to the frame.
- Check the axle housings for any debris.
- Inspect the wheels to ensure spokes from the axle to the rim are secure and the rims are not bent.
- Check front casters for any wobbling, alignment, or excessive play.

Monthly

- Check for loose nuts and bolts. If any need replacing, only replace with the same size, grade, and strength rating.
- Check for any cracks in the frame.
- Check that any removable parts, such as leg rests or backrests, can be easily removed and replaced.
- Check the wheel alignment.
- Thoroughly clean the chair and use a car wax on the frame to make the next cleaning easier.

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Annually

- If you have a folding chair, check that the chair opens and closes easily and lubricate the folding mechanism if necessary.
- Lubricate all pivot points and ball bearings. *(This may have to be done by an authorized expert.)*

For Electric Wheelchairs

- The above suggestions should also be followed. It is more important to keep a motorized wheelchair cleaner than a manual chair. Some of the maintenance procedures can be more difficult because of the connections to batteries, gears, and motors. If in doubt, call local wheelchair repair service.
- Check all electrical systems. Check battery connections on a regular basis. Cables and terminals may need to be cleaned with a wire brush if corrosion appears. Check batteries on a weekly or monthly basis.
- Check joystick controls to make sure they respond appropriately and are intact.

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