

Pushing Wheelchairs - Guidelines

- Plan route before moving wheelchair. Clear a pathway and/or remove any obstacles (i.e. equipment, closed doors).
- Ask for help if weight is too heavy or awkward. Additional healthcare workers may be required if wheelchair is extra wide, increased patient weight, maneuvering on ramps or additional equipment required (e.g., I.V. Pole)
- Ask patient to place feet on wheelchair footrests and hands on wheelchair armrests or lap.
- Perform all movements in a smooth, slow and controlled manner. Avoid quick and jerky movements.
- Where applicable, use the elevator button or door stopper to hold door open.
- Push before you pull when possible.
- Ensure wheelchair is functioning properly (i.e. brakes, wheels rolling, footrests, etc.).

Moving Wheelchair Forward/Backward:

- Stand in a wide base of support with one foot ahead of the other and back straight. Hold onto wheelchair handles or cross bar (if present) with elbows bent close to body. Shift weight forward/back from one leg to the other in the direction of movement.
- If front wheels are turned and it is difficult to move wheelchair forward, pull the wheelchair back slightly and then push forward OR push wheelchair from side to straighten front wheels and move behind wheelchair to push forward.
- If pushing forward over a gap, start movement of wheelchair a slight distance away so wheels are straight when moving over gap.
- If moving DOWN a steep ramp, walk backwards for better control of the wheelchair.

Turning Wheelchair:

- Stand in a wide base of support and back straight. Hold onto wheelchair handles with elbows close to body. Keep body directly behind back of wheelchair and keep feet facing in the direction you are moving.
- Take wider turns when possible. Slow down when approaching a corner and use mirrors to see around corners when possible.
- If moving wheelchair in a small space, repeat small forward/back movements until wheelchair is facing desired direction.

Incorrect Technique



Correct Technique

