

A LITTLE EXTRA EFFORT

Transporting Seniors With Limited Mobility Requires Some Planning

When transporting a senior with mobility issues, winging it often leads to problems. You may find yourself faced with a restroom that does not have a door wide enough for your Mom's wheelchair to fit through. Or your destination may require more walking than your Dad can handle with his 4-legged cane.

The process of transporting seniors often includes some extra steps to make the experience more enjoyable and safer for everyone. You have to plan. How will you get in and out of the car? Should you assist in seating your loved one, and if so, how do you do it safely, while maintaining their dignity? If there is a wheelchair involved, will you take it with you, and do you have the ability to store it in the car?

You also have to be prepared for mobility issues at your destination. And it takes some concentration to move consistently at a slower pace.



When you become responsible for transporting a senior loved one, the wheelchair access signs you never noticed before will stick out like a sore thumb.

ASSISTING BASICS

Here are some fundamentals for caregivers who are helping a loved one with limited mobility to get around town.

- ◆ **Research & Inform** - Before jumping in the car, call ahead to learn about parking, ramps and other access issues. Also, inform people how they can help or if they should not help.
- ◆ **Leave Enough Time** - This lessens stress and reduces the chance of mishaps.
- ◆ **Communicate** - When assisting someone, it often helps to tell them what you are going to do next. This makes it easier for them to work with you and can alleviate tension.
- ◆ **Utilize Tools** - There are apparatus that can make tasks easier and safer. For example, a gait belt provides a secure and central point (the waist) to hold, lift and assist. And a swivel cushion spins 360 degrees and makes it easier to position the person you are going to assist.

FROM WHEELCHAIR TO CAR

The process of getting in and out of a wheelchair is called a transfer. This action can pose risks for the chair-bound and the caregiver. Here are some tips for a caregiver to complete a safe transfer when seating a loved one in a car.

- ◆ Stand with your back to the open car door and pull the wheelchair toward yourself. Then lock both brakes on the chair.
- ◆ Bend your knees and place your arms under the person's armpits and around their back. Have the person lean toward you and wrap their arms around your shoulders (not the neck.), if possible. Now lift with your legs.
- ◆ Pivot so the person's backside is facing the inside of the car. Now bend your knees and lower the person into the car. Be careful not to hit their head on the door frame.
- ◆ Take a moment for everyone to gain their balance, then swing both of their legs into the car at the same time. Now buckle up!!!

(Source: Easter Seals)



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