

BASICS OF WHEELCHAIR TO CAR TRANSITION



Getting in and out of a car is something most of us do every day without a second thought. But add a wheelchair and suddenly this simple activity becomes difficult—and potentially risky. Yet, as this video shows, knowing what to do and what to look out for can make it as easy as possible for the passenger and driver.

Here's a quick summary of the key points in the video, which shows how to manage getting a person who is seated in the front seat of a car out of the car and seated in a wheelchair.

Getting out of the Car and into a Wheelchair

- > When using a folding wheelchair, make sure the wheelchair clicks into a locked position.
- > Make sure you know how stable the person is when standing and turning.
- > Attach the wheelchair leg rests.
- > Securely lock the brakes on the wheelchair.
- > Guide the person's legs and head out of the car.
- > Help the person stand and regain balance.
- > Don't use the car door for support.
- > When the person is seated in the wheelchair, unlock the brakes and move toward your destination.

Remember that this video shows a typical wheelchair and a person who can stand and turn. You may have to adjust this method to meet the needs of a person with more limited ability to stand or one who uses a different type of wheelchair. Many additional devices are available that may be helpful, such as vests, belts, door braces, and swivel cushions. There are also lighter-weight travel wheelchairs. Ask a physical therapist, nurse, or doctor for advice.

Getting into a Car from a Wheelchair

Although this video doesn't show a caregiver helping a person move from a wheelchair into a car, it is basically the same process in reverse. Here are some tips:

- > Make sure there is enough room on the passenger side to accommodate the width of the wheelchair.
- > Remember to lock the wheelchair brakes before you open the car door. Unlock them as you move the wheelchair into position.
- > Make sure the car seat is moved as far back as possible.
- > Move the wheelchair into position and then relock the brakes.

- > Help the person stand and then turn to sit down on the car seat.
- > Lift the person's legs into the car, and avoid any bumps on the head.
- > Collapse the wheelchair and stow it in the trunk. Be just as careful doing this step as you are during the transfer so that you don't injure yourself.
- > Consider keeping a pillow in the car that you can use for help positioning.

Additional Resources

- > The National Center on Senior Transportation's [Tips for Drivers and Passengers](#) has many helpful suggestions about planning and organizing trips so that they are as comfortable and enjoyable as possible. The tip sheet encourages drivers to think about the passenger's point of view. What does the passenger understand about the purpose of the trip? How long will it take? Where are we going? Do I have to go? These and other factors may affect the person's tolerance for sitting in a car and waiting in traffic.
- > If travel by car is very difficult or not practical, investigate other forms of transportation—paratransit vans, buses, or ambulettes. The [National Aging and Disability Transportation Center](#) (NADTC) works to increase transportation options for older adults to enable them to live more independently in their communities and provides publications, tool kits, and training opportunities. NADTC is a program of the Federal Transit Administration, funded through a cooperative agreement of [Easterseals](#) and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging.
- > For veterans and caregivers of veterans, visit www.caregiver.va.gov or call 1-855-260-3274 for more information about resources and support.

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