

To Wheel or Not to Wheel

Living with your physical disability is a lifelong journey, with highs and lows. Everybody feels the impacts of ageing as they get older.

While most people begin to feel the impacts of ageing in their 60s, people with a physical disability often begin to feel tired and sore earlier and may start to slow down much earlier in life, some as early as their 30s.

Many people living with a physical disability comment that they wish they had known what was going to happen and wanted more information to help them prepare.



While some people request equipment from their health professionals or people to support them at home, many view it as a setback in their independence. Common responses include “well that’s a slap in the face!”, “but I worked so hard to walk and transfer by myself”, or “I’m walking till the day I die - I’m not using a wheelchair” or “I can’t have someone else come into my home”.

Having equipment and support does not replace what you can do, they can work together. They are never the end of the line.



Sometimes the suggestion is because there is a need to make a big change so that you do not injure yourself or those who support you. Sometimes there are activities you can do to regain your previous skills.

For most people, equipment and support is suggested to help you conserve your energy. If you are still walking and completing transfers independently, there is a very good chance that you’ll continue to walk and transfer.

To Wheel or Not to Wheel cont.

What equipment and support could mean for you

- Wheelchairs and scooters can mean you can move over longer distances and have the energy to walk around the home and shorter distances.
- Walkers can mean that you have the energy to walk more often.
- Hoists can mean you are at less risk of falling and have less stress on your body making you more comfortable. Using hoists also looks after the people who support you so that they are more available to help you do the activities that you want to do.
- Support from other people with household tasks can mean you have more energy to do other activities that are enjoyable. Many people spend hours doing household tasks that use up all their energy which leaves them unable to do anything else in their day.

What equipment and support could mean for parents

For parents, it can be a similar feeling when equipment or support is suggested. Using equipment or getting support in the home can mean less strain on you as well as your child. It can mean more “parent” than “carer” time and give you more time to get out and about. This is important for everyone’s wellbeing and confidence in your child being supported into the future as you get older yourself.

Health professionals and community support coordinators often hear similar comments from people who have embraced equipment or support in the home and community: “thank you for helping me get a scooter or wheelchair, I can now go out for coffee with friends or take my kids to the park” and “thank you for helping me get someone to cook and clean, I’m finally getting out of the house”.

To wheel or not to wheel... it's worth thinking about.



Visit futurethinking.abilitycentre.com.au for more information.

