

Choosing the Right Powerchair

WHY ASSESSMENT, SEATING & TRIALS MATTER

Choosing the right powerchair is about much more than selecting a model. For someone living with complex mobility or postural needs, a powerchair can become an important part of everyday life — supporting mobility, positioning, comfort, participation and independence.

START WITH THE INDIVIDUAL

No two powerchair users are the same. The right solution starts with understanding the individual — their physical and postural needs, functional abilities, lifestyle, goals and the environments in which their powerchair will be used.

A comprehensive assessment with an Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist experienced in wheelchair prescription can help identify the features, seating, positioning and functionality required.

Rather than starting with “Which powerchair is best?”, the better question is:

“WHAT DOES THIS PERSON NEED THEIR POWERCHAIR TO ENABLE THEM TO DO?”

COMPLEX SEATING & POSITIONING

For people with complex needs, the powerchair base is only one part of the overall solution. Seating and positioning are equally important.

An assessment may consider pelvic and trunk positioning, postural support, pressure management, head and upper limb support, comfort, functional reach and the person’s ability to independently operate their chair.

Powered seating functions such as tilt, recline, elevating leg supports and seat elevation may also form part of the solution where appropriate.

The aim is to bring the powerchair, seating system and positioning components together to create a solution tailored to the individual.



THE IMPORTANCE OF POWERCHAIR TRIALS

Specifications can tell us a lot about a powerchair – but they can't replace actually experiencing it. A powerchair trial provides an opportunity for the participant, therapist and assistive technology specialist to explore different options and assess how they perform in practical, everyday situations. Trials can help answer important questions...

- Is the seating supportive and comfortable?
- Can the user operate the controls effectively?
- Can the chair manoeuvre through their home and regular environments?
- How does it perform outdoors?
- Are the powered seating functions appropriate?
- Does the overall configuration support the person's functional goals?

In more complex prescriptions, multiple trials or adjustments may be required before arriving at the most appropriate solution.

WHAT ABOUT NDIS FUNDING?

For NDIS participants, a powerchair may be considered for funding when it relates to the person's disability support needs and meets relevant NDIS funding requirements. An experienced therapist and assistive technology provider can work collaboratively with the participant to assess requirements, undertake appropriate equipment trials and provide the supporting information required for the recommended solution.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT POWERCHAIR

There isn't one powerchair that is right for everyone. The best outcomes come from looking beyond the chair itself and considering the whole person and the complete mobility solution- including seating, positioning, controls, powered functions, environment, lifestyle & future needs. Working collaboratively with the participant, their therapist and an experienced assistive technology provider allows different options to be explored, trialled & refined before determining the final configuration.

A well-prescribed powerchair is more than mobility – it's a personalised solution supporting independence, positioning, comfort & participation in everyday life.

LIVE LIFE

