
NCHPAD

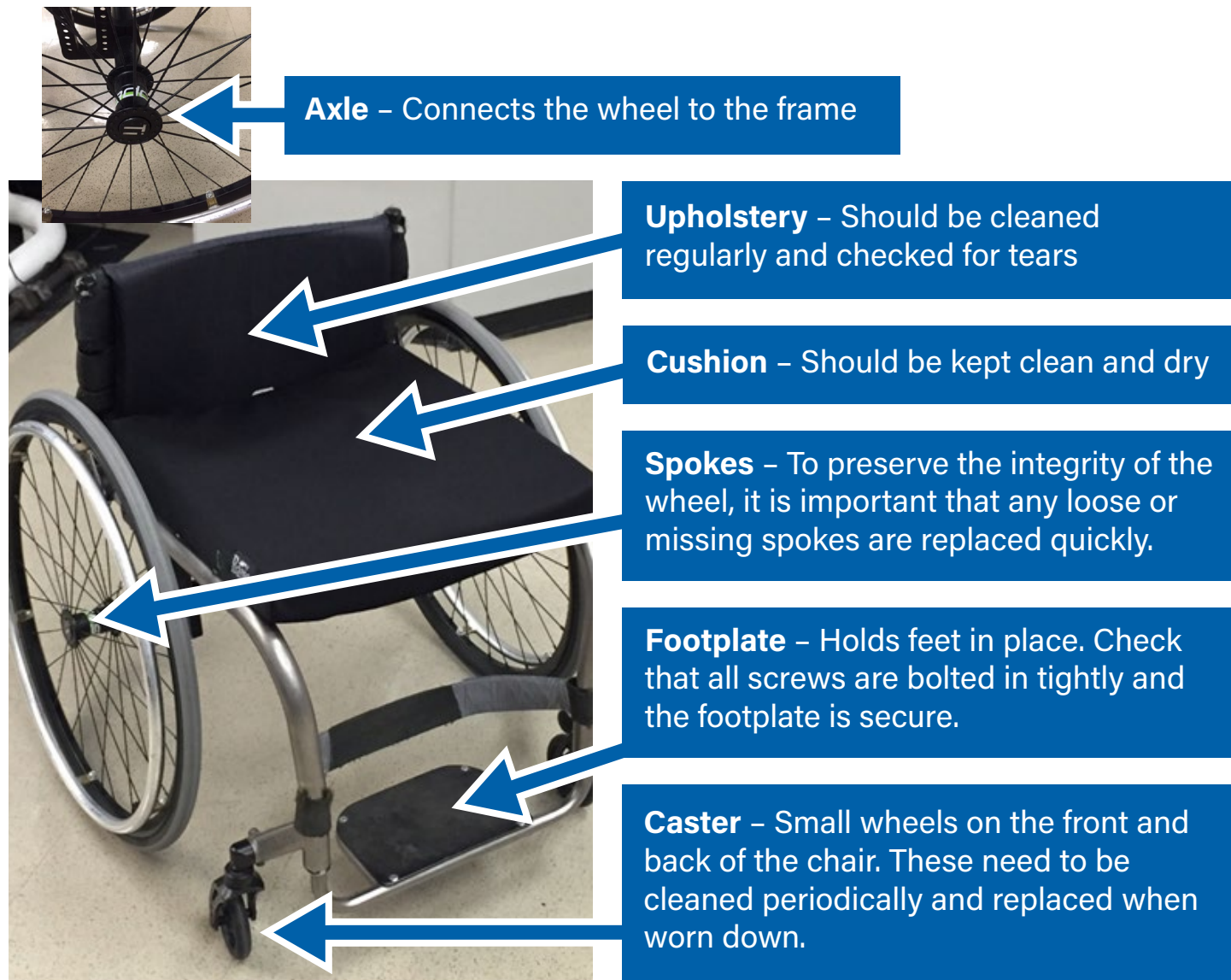
WHEELCHAIR MAINTENANCE & CLEANING GUIDE



Wheelchairs certainly can make a statement about their users. Not only is it important to keep your chair clean and well-maintained for peak performance and longevity, but also so it reflects a positive, proficient self-image of you as its user. Another bonus of a clean, well-maintained chair is that it will make it easier to propel and steer, causing less strain on your arms and reducing your chance of injury.

THE PARTS OF A WHEELCHAIR

The first step to maintaining a clean, high functioning wheelchair is to know all the chair components. You can reference the diagram below when working on these different parts of the chair.



OVERALL CLEANING

Keeping your wheelchair clean, dry and odor free is your most important task. This will help extend the life of your chair and all of its parts. This will also help you look and feel better engaging in social interactions throughout the day.

If an accident or spill takes place, clean your chair immediately by placing your cushion cover in the washing machine. If that is not immediately possible, be sure to wash your cushion and/or any fabric that got soiled with warm water and soap. You may need to sit on a towel to allow the fabric to properly dry.

For general cleaning, paper or a regular towel and any household cleaner should be sufficient for most of the wheelchair parts. Use the towel and cleaner to wipe down the cushion, upholstery, rims, and frame. As a general rule an overall wipe down should be performed once a month; however, how much you put your chair through and the type of climate you live in may dictate how often it needs to be cleaned.

While performing your overall cleaning, be sure to check for wear, tear, and other potential damage to your wheelchair, including damage to the frame and any other components. Look for cracks, scratches, dents, tears or bent areas. You will also want to check for any loose components such as nuts, bolts, or screws.

WHEELS AND TIRES

First, if you have air-filled (pneumatic) tires, you will need to check the air pressure of your tires on a regular basis. Under-inflated tires can make it harder to push and reduce the life of your tires. The air pressure recommendations should be printed on the side of your tire. You should be able to use a simple bicycle pump with air gauge to pump up your tires. Depending on the type of valve you have, you may or may not need an adapter. If the tread on your tire is worn down to half its original thickness, there are any major tears or damage to the tires, or your side walls are beginning to bulge out, you should replace your tires. If your tires have spokes, you should check them often for any loose or broken spokes by simply plucking them like a guitar string. Too many loose, broken, or missing spokes can change the integrity of your tire.

Bearings for both your wheels and casters may be sealed but often still accumulate hair, fibers and other strings, which can decrease their ability to function properly. You can use tweezers to remove these foreign objects. For casters specifically this may require you to remove the casters to get a thorough cleaning. Be sure to clean the axle as well before you replace the caster. Once the caster and bearings have been cleaned, be sure to wipe them down with a lubricant such as WD40. Other points to check on your casters include any nicks, chips or cuts, which can lead to quick deterioration of your casters and should be fixed or replaced upon notice.

Axles, especially on quick release tires, can collect oil, grease and other grime and should also be cleaned on



a regular basis. To clean your axles, use a dry towel and lubricant and wipe thoroughly. Your axles should come off easily and ball locks should engage easily and fully.

SEAT AND BACKREST

Your seat and backrest should provide proper support while remaining comfortable. Your upholstery may receive the most wear and tear of any part of your chair, and certainly provide maximal opportunities to create odors due to everyday sweat, spills, and accidents. Mild soap and water should be used to clean the upholstery at least once a month. While cleaning, check for any rips, holes or other damage to the upholstery, as this could lead to poor posture or performance. Once the upholstery is clean and dry, you may want to spray it down with a water-resistant spray, such as Scotch Guard, to help prevent future odors.



SIMPLE FIXES

Loose bolts and nuts anywhere on your chair can be tightened using an Allen wrench set. You will need to check whether your chair requires metric or imperial Allen wrenches.

Loose spokes can be tightened using a spoke wrench or, occasionally, by simply using your fingers and turning them clockwise.

Rough scratches on your push rims can be smoothed out by rubbing over them with another piece of metal, such as the file on a pair of nail clippers or even a key from your key chain.

Changing a tube on your tire, while slightly more challenging, can still be done. You will need a set of tire leavers, as well as a new tube in the proper size. To watch how to change a tire, click [here](#).

WHEELCHAIR MAINTENANCE TOOL BOX:

- WD40 or other lubricant
- Screwdriver
- Towel/ rag to clean
- Towel for emergencies
- Allen wrenches (metric and imperial)
- Spoke Wrench
- Adjustable wrench
- Spare tube
- Valve adapter
- Tire levers

