



Part of the Van Products Caregiver Guide

Trusted Vendors of Motorized Wheelchairs





Initial Considerations

The selection of a motorized wheelchair is one of the most important decisions one has to make when faced with overcoming limited mobility. A wheelchair is a highly personalized product that is with you at all times. Additionally, as wheelchairs become increasingly expensive, it becomes more important to select a wheelchair that will last for a long time and provide you with the comfort and mobility you need. We put together a list of a few recommendations to consider when looking for a wheelchair

What do you need your wheelchair to do?

While this question may seem to have an obvious answer, it is the first, and probably most important, factor to consider in selecting your motorized wheelchair. Different people have different mobility limitations and situational needs that should be considered before beginning the process of looking for a wheelchair. Some of the primary considerations should be:



- **How wide does the wheelchair need to be?**
 - A good balance should be found by measuring home paths and doorways and considering the size of the person needing assistance
- **How tall should the wheelchair be?**
 - People of different heights need to buy correspondingly sized wheelchairs
- **What comfort functions should the wheelchair have?**
 - Reclining seats, armrests, etc. should be taken into consideration; however, the more features, the heavier and more difficult the chair is to transport
- **Are the controls manual or automatic?**
 - Depending on the specific disability of the occupant, certain control functionality may be preferable or necessary
- **Where does your wheelchair need to go?**
 - This question encompasses a number of factors including: travel capabilities, terrain, weight, and needed durability
- **What will your wheelchair work in conjunction with?**
 - It's important to consider which wheelchairs will be compatible with other mobility-enabling devices like: wheelchair vans, specialty baths and commodes, stair lifts, etc.
- **How would a change in condition affect your needs?**
 - Some wheelchairs are more customizable than others and, whether you can expect an increase or decrease in capability, you should consider future needs



Selecting a Retailer

Purchasing an electric wheelchair is a difficult task to approach because of the logistics, coupled with the importance to your life and mobility. For first time buyers, this can be an arduous pursuit because you may not know where to start or what to benchmark your purchase against. Fortunately, more resources and options exist today for wheelchair buyers than ever before. Here is an overview of some options:

Traditional Retail Stores

- Buying from a retail store is a great option for first-time buyers or those who may not be sure of what is offered. Having a brick-and-mortar showroom allows buyers to talk through needs and test a chair prior to purchase. Van Products, for instance, is a partner company with [Orthopedic Services](#), an on-site wheelchair retailer, which provides help to first-time buyers or those who want more information regarding their purchase. Most medium to large cities have retail outlets and, increasingly, it is possible to find a few to compare within your area.
- On the other hand, retail outlets can sometimes be more expensive than other options and might have a limited selection in-house.

Online , Telephone, or Wholesale

- Purchasing a wheelchair online, over the phone, or from a wholesaler is usually cheaper than buying from a retail store. Additionally, wholesalers may provide some limited guidance and may also have a warehouse to view products prior to purchase. This option is usually for more experienced buyers or those who are confident in what they need.
- Purchasing online, via telephone, or wholesale can be an off-putting experience for buyers who value a personal relationship and the guidance provided by a store.

Manufacturer Direct

- Buying directly from a manufacturer is a more recent development but is becoming increasingly more common. This option makes sense for buyers who are looking for the best possible price and often comes with a manufacturer direct warranty or other benefits.
- This is very good method for those who know what they're looking for; however, buying from a manufacturer is somewhat impersonal and doesn't provide consumers with information or direct comparison options when looking to purchase.

A good strategy for potential buyers is to consider their needs and find the best strategy to fit individual needs and objectives. It is always great to have the support, guidance, and comfort of purchasing from a local or regional store; however, for those who value price over convenience, or have made a previous purchase, the other routes are great to explore.