Caring for Your Wheelchair

To keep your wheelchair in good shape and working well, you need to take care of it. This guide will give you checks to do each week, each month, or once each year to prevent problems with your chair. Be sure to review your manufacturer's warranty and your maintenance contract to see if there are other checks you need to do.

Each Week

Tires
- Air filled tires: Check to be sure the air pressure is at the right level. Add air if needed.
- Solid tires: Check for cracks or worn areas.

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Spokes
- Strum each spoke with your finger to make a twang sound. No sound often means the spoke needs tightened. If the spokes are too tight, the wheel can get out of alignment.

Hands Rims
- Check for loose screws and tighten them as needed.

Axles
- Quick release axles should be taken off once a week. Put a few drops of white lithium grease on a clean cloth and pull it through the axle receptors and bearings. Then wipe off the axles. Place the wheel back on the same side.

Batteries (for Power Wheelchair)
- Wear eye goggles to prevent splashing into eyes. Check the water level of lead acid batteries. If low, refill using distilled water.
- Check the connections. If there is any white crust on the terminal, remove cables and clean with a battery brush. Use a cotton swab or a gloved finger to apply a light coat of plain petroleum jelly to the battery terminals. Then hook the connections back up.

Each Month

Metal Parts
- Spray the chrome or painted parts with stainless steel spray and wipe clean. Soiled, moving parts will not work well.
- Wipe on car wax with a damp cloth, let it dry to a haze and wipe it off with a dry cloth.

Upholstery
- Wipe down with any household spray cleaners, like Windex or 409.

Telescoping Tubes
- Clean the tubes and rub a little paraffin or candle wax. Don't use oil. It just collects a lot of dust.
Once Each Year

Wheel Bearings
- Check for side play or wobble. Wobble means your bearings are worn and should be replaced.

Front Caster
1. Take off front wheel and pop out the bearings. Check them out and clean or replace them.
2. Remove cap on stem housing. Remove the nut holding the stem. Pull out the wheel, fork and stem. As before, tap out the bearings in the caster housing. Check, clean and replace them.
3. Tighten the caster to where it just about swivels. If you leave it too loose, your front casters will wobble at faster speeds.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.