



Choosing a mobility scooter

Purchasing a mobility scooter will open up your world if you currently struggle to walk around your community. There are many different options so it is important you know what to look for.

Where to start

The best place to start is to visit (or request a visit from) a local supplier of mobility scooters. You can search online or in your yellow pages but often the best way is to ask around. If you see somebody on the street or in the shops ask them where they got theirs! You are looking for a supplier who meets the following criteria.

- They ask you lots of questions about your needs including what kind of home environment you live in and where you will want to go on your scooter.
- They are prepared to come to your home with one or two scooters to trial if you are not able to come into the shop.
- They offer a 12 month service after you purchase a scooter and are able to repair the scooter if needed.
- They offer recognised brands of scooters (you can check the brand online) rather than just having had one shipment of a foreign brand.

What to consider before purchasing

Mobility scooters are ideal if you are able to walk around your own home but need assistance to get out and about. If you struggle to walk inside you may be better suited to a wheelchair and this will often be provide for you by the Ministry of Health (via Enable – ask your GP to refer you). Some people use a wheelchair indoors but a mobility scooter outdoors. Mobility scooters are a bit like cars – there are a wide range of shapes and sizes and you need to choose one that suits you. However they are not meant to be sat in all day everyday and if you have a physical health condition you should be checked over by a physiotherapist before you consider purchasing one. **On the Go Physio** can do a one-off assessment of you at home to advise on this. If you think a mobility scooter is right for you consider the following

- Where will you be going on it? If you will only ever be on footpaths and in shopping malls you may be able to get an urban style scooter. If you live in the country or will be going 'off road' you will need to get a more rugged style scooter to suit these conditions.
- How far will you need to go – consider the capacity of the scooter battery.
- Where will you store it? Most mobility scooters are too large to come inside (although you can get particularly small ones if needed) and need to be stored in a garage and near a power source. If you have to store it outside you will need to get a sturdy rain cover.
- Will you need a scooter that can be loaded into a car or will you only be taking it out from your own home?
- Do you want a three or four wheeler? Three wheels are more manoeuvrable (which is why you see so many three wheeled prams around these days) but four wheels are more stable and safer on uneven terrain. You may wish to try both out before you decide.
- If you are a heavy person you will need to check the weight limit of any scooter. Scooters with a higher weight limit are available but they will cost more.

Taking a test drive

Once you have narrowed down your search and have found a scooter that will meet your needs it's time to give it a spin! Use this checklist to make sure the scooter suits your needs and is safe.

Does it suit you?

- ✓ Is the seat comfortable and not too wide or too narrow?
- ✓ Are you well supported through your back and thighs?
- ✓ Are your feet flat on the floor or able to rest up on the footpads?
- ✓ Can you easily reach the steering wheel (tiller)?
- ✓ Will it be easy for you to use the hand controls for long drives?
- ✓ Do you have good leg room?
- ✓ Can you easily get on and off? Some seats will swivel around to help with this.
- ✓ Are the armrests the right height and do they lift up to allow you to get on and off easily?
- ✓ Can you use the mirrors?
- ✓ Is there space to carry the things you need or can a bag be added?

On most scooters everything mentioned above can be adjusted or modified for you. A good supplier or salesperson should be able to alter everything to fit you or be able to advise you on a better option in their range.

Is it safe?

- ✓ Does it have front and rear lights, indicators, hazard lights, a horn and a reversing beeper?
- ✓ Can it be 'free-wheeled' in case of a break down?
- ✓ Do the brakes come on automatically when you release the hand controls and do they come on if the power fails?
- ✓ Is the battery sealed so it won't leak battery acid?
- ✓ Can you adjust the speed and set it to 'slow' even if the controls get knocked?

Other considerations

- ✓ You may be eligible for a Lottery Grant to help pay for the scooter. You can look at this online or ask the scooter supplier if they have an application pack.
- ✓ Once you take the scooter home don't forget to put it as an extra on your contents insurance.
- ✓ You may like to consider AA membership in case of a breakdown, flat battery or lost keys while out and about.

If you are successful in gaining a Lottery Grant for a mobility scooter, **On the Go Physio** can do the final sign off for you at your home at no cost to you (this is covered as part of your Grant).

If you are purchasing privately and would like some extra advice on what would suit you or whether you will be safe to drive **On the Go Physio** provide home visits and can take you on a thorough road safety test.