

Choosing the Best Mobility Device for Your Needs

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When searching for a mobility device to help you stay active, it's easy to become overwhelmed by all the options available. Finding a home medical equipment (HME) dealer who listens to your needs is important, but it helps to learn as much as you can and be a well-informed consumer. The following questions will help you become your own mobility expert and determine which type of device will help you stay comfortable, active and independent:

What type of device is right for you?

It is important to meet with your doctor to discuss your abilities and needs before you even start shopping for a device. With most conditions, doctors want you to remain as active as possible. The Medicare algorithm (see diagram on page 7) provides a guide for prescribing mobility equipment for different levels of disability. As people's disability or age progresses, they may need to move further down the algorithm to a more advanced device.

Where will you use the equipment?

A good mobility consultant will ask if you plan to use the device primarily in your home, outdoors or both. This decision will help determine what type of tires and motor you will need, as well as what size will work best in your home or your vehicle.

Do you need customized seating?

Especially if you will use your device for more than four hours a day, seating is very important. Inadequate or improper seating can lead to pressure sores, poor posture and other injuries. Depending on your disability, you may need specialized seating to help with certain tasks. Specialized seating may include cushions, angled

seating, swivel seats or a power seat lift to raise and lower as needed. If you are unable to stand or walk, consider how you will transfer to and from your mobility device to help you determine what seating options may be helpful.

Do the controls on the device provide comfortable and safe driving?

The type of controls you require will depend on your abilities and upper body strength. If you maintain some or all of your upper body strength, consider a manual wheelchair, which is self-propelled, or a power-operated vehicle (POV)/scooter with handle controls. People with very limited upper body or hand strength should consider a power wheelchair with a joystick for easy operating.

What size device is best?

Many devices have larger handles, bigger wheels and longer platforms. In most cases, the ideal device shouldn't be much larger than your body. Before purchasing, ask your dealer to bring the device to your home so you can try it and make sure it fits in your vehicle. Sometimes a few inches can make a huge difference when fitting through doorways or closing your trunk.

Are treaded tires better?

The choice of tires often depends on where the device will be used. Treaded tires are ideal for outdoor use, but may bring dirt and stones into your home if the device is also used indoors. Ask your dealer about different tire options for the device you choose.

How will you transport the device?

If you plan to use the device outside your home, it's crucial to consider how you will transport it. The device may be able to fit in your current vehicle using a compatible lift, or you may need a specialized van. Some devices can be taken apart for transporting, so ask your dealer or the manufacturer for a recommendation on how best to transport your chosen device.

Are products advertised as “FREE” too good to be true?

Each type of mobility device is reimbursed differently through Medicare. Before making your decision, talk with your doctor to determine the best equipment for your needs and abilities. Many people who have received a device for free later find it does not suit their needs, doesn't work in their home or they can't transport it, and in most cases the person is unable to return the device. Use your Medicare dollars wisely to buy equipment that fits you, your home and your lifestyle. Once you decide which equipment is the right fit, ask what your financial responsibility will be so you can plan ahead.

How much will the device cost?

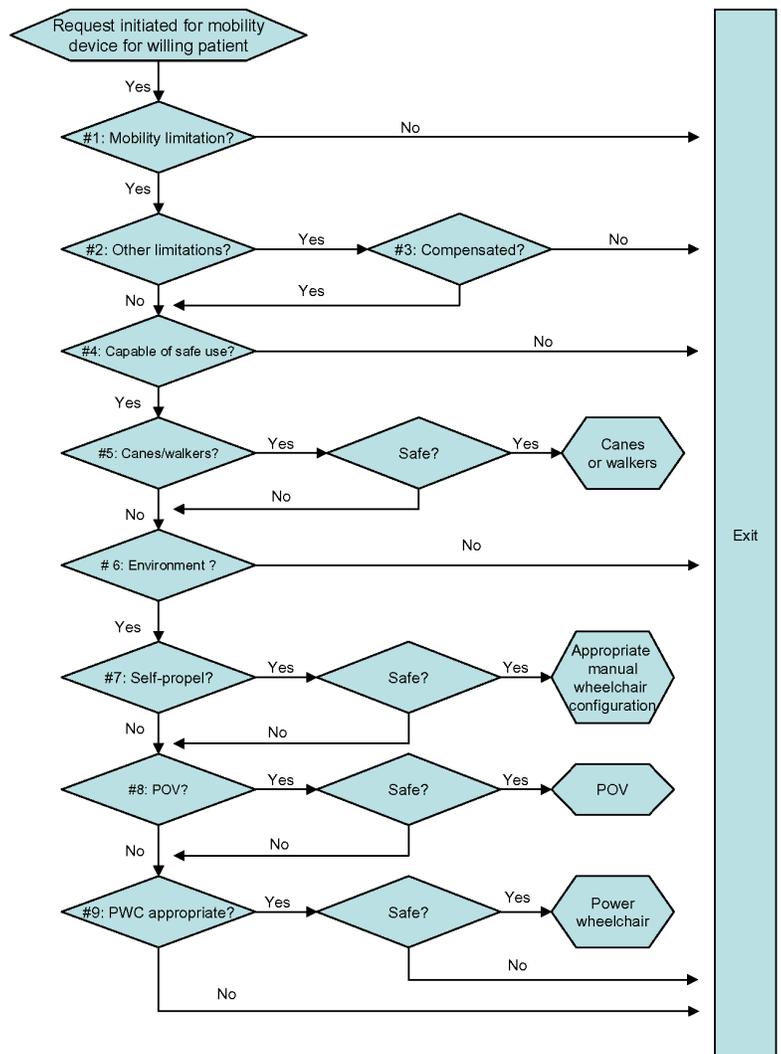
Though devices are priced differently, low prices aren't always a “bargain.” Be sure to estimate the life cycle costs of the product, especially if you will use it every day. Ask your dealer about service replacement costs of key components and how often batteries generally need to be replaced. It is also helpful to understand exactly who to call for service repairs before buying and how quickly repairs can be completed.

At the end of the day, you know your needs and abilities better than anyone else. Asking the tough questions in advance will help you find a device to best suit your needs and lifestyle. For a recommendation on an HME dealer near you, contact Amigo Mobility at 800-MY-AMIGO or info@myamigo.com. ■

About Amigo Mobility International

Amigo Mobility manufactures a complete line of innovative mobility products including power-operated vehicles/scooters, trunk and van lifts and motorized shopping carts. Designed to bring comfort and freedom to customers, Amigo's quality, made in Michigan products have been *Improving Lives Through Mobility*® since 1968.

Clinical Criteria Algorithm for Wheelchair Prescribing



Source: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services