

HELP *my* MOBILITY

Buyer's Guide



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Help My Mobility - Buyer's Guide: Introduction

Welcome to Help My Mobility's Buyer's Guide. This booklet contains buying advice and tips on how to go about purchasing various mobility products, things to consider, things to avoid, and things to ask before handing over your money.

Our aim is to provide you with in-depth information about each mobility aid, focusing on helping you to find the most comfortable, convenient products for you.

The booklet is divided into individual sections, each dedicated to a particular mobility product, describing what they are used for, key features, optional extras and buying tips.

This guide is intended purely for informational purposes, and Help My Mobility wishes to stress that all of the images of mobility aids featured in this guide are purely for illustrational means. We recommend getting several professional opinions and quotes before making any decisions, and to search thoroughly, preferably testing equipment if possible.

Choosing the right equipment for you is paramount to us, and therefore the choice must be made solely by the individual making the purchase. Our advice is given to ensure this is the case with all our users, and we do not sell any products, we can simply put the user in touch with suitable manufacturers at their request.

For more information about various mobility products, visit our website www.help-my-mobility.org

If you have any queries do not hesitate to call our helpline, on **0845 8387085**.

Welcome to Help My Mobility buyers guide for adjustable beds. We have written this guide to help you in purchasing the right adjustable bed for your needs. Please note that this guide is for information purposes only and you should seek medical and professional advice before buying.

What is an adjustable bed?

An adjustable bed offers the user the ability to adjust their lying position by raising and lowering both the top end (head end) and the bottom end (leg end) to obtain a suitable sleeping or relaxing position. On the majority of beds both the top and bottom ends can be adjusted independently to give endless sleeping positions. The bed is powered by electrical motors and operated by a remote control to give ease of use. Modern beds are often fitted with extra features such as heat and massage, which can be utilised for comfort, luxury or medical reasons.

How should I approach buying an adjustable bed?

An adjustable bed is an investment just like any regular bed. Your new bed should be one which you would be happy to use for the next twenty years, and so approach your purchase as if you were buying any other piece of furniture. Do not rush into any decision, and make sure to look at, and more importantly try, several different variations before even considering parting with your cash.

Benefits and purpose of an adjustable bed

Adjustable beds are almost always more expensive than a standard bed, so make sure that it will benefit you and your needs. The majority of adjustable bed users we speak to make the purchase for one, or a combination of the following reasons:

1. **Comfort** – With the ability to adjust the bed a comfortable sitting or sleeping position can be obtained, making watching TV or reading a book in bed more comfortable.
2. **Ease of Mobility** – Sometimes getting in and out of bed can be an issue, with an adjustable bed this can be made easier by raising the back to a near seating position. The user can then twist round, lowering legs to the ground and stand.
3. **Medical** – Having the ability to adjust the head and leg levels can often help with medical conditions such as swollen ankles, acid reflux and back pain.

What should I look for in an adjustable bed?

Although adjustable beds have distinct features which set them apart from regular beds, remember not to discount the factors normally associated with regular bed shopping. Style, size, mattress type and cost should all be taken into consideration alongside the reasons for buying an adjustable.

1. **Style** – Traditionally, adjustable beds have been seen as bland and boring, with styling limited to Divan, or even hospital style bed frames. A quick search on the internet will reveal some innovative companies producing very sleek, modern designs with colours and wood types to compliment other bedroom fittings, making them a viable choice when considering interior design options. Of course there is nothing wrong with a Divan or hospital style bed, and on a budget they will be perhaps the better option. These have their own benefits, such as extra storage space, will require little to no maintenance, and can be handy should the user suffer from health complications.

2. **Size** – Dependent on circumstance, size may not be everything. If you have mobility issues, single beds offer multiple routes to get in and out of bed relatively safely. This may be something to consider for couples who both require assistance in this manner. Similarly, double beds can be configured to have two independent halves controlled separately, and offers a cheaper alternative to two single beds. King size beds are also available, for those who enjoy space and luxury in bed, again with two independent controls for each side.
3. **Mattress** – The most important aspect of buying any bed, the mattress needs to be comfy and supportive. This will boil down to individual preference. There are several elements to deciding on a mattress:
 - **Sprung or Foam?** - While the debate between sprung and foam mattresses is endless, foam seems to be the way to go when purchasing an adjustable bed. Why? Given the folding nature of an adjustable, foam is more flexible and responsive in keeping aligned with the bed frame. It will maintain its shape better than a sprung, and will not need to be reset to the flat position when not in use. They also collect less dust and as a result are less harmful to allergy sufferers. However some will emit other chemicals from within the structure when in use, which can cause respiratory irritation. The myth about their heat distribution is also misunderstood, as a good foam mattress allows air circulation through the fibres, preventing heat build-up while still moulding to the body. Some companies coat their foam mattresses, and in particular memory foam mattresses, which causes air to become trapped inside the mattress, meaning it becomes warm. This may be of benefit if someone is susceptible to cold environments. Foam mattresses also offer the option of having any massage or heat equipment built into the structure. Sprung mattresses on the other hand, offer more stability and are often firmer. The sensation of sinking into the mattress is removed without a compromise in comfort, which appeals to those particularly with movement difficulties. While they traditionally collect dust, this can be combatted with allergy protective bed linen and covers, and these extras are something to consider when weighing up your options. Always bear in mind there are other mattress types available, including ones made from a rubber/latex material, which allows for a more breathable experience and is an alternative to memory foam, while air pocket mattresses can provide pressure relief at certain points of the body, perfect for people with arthritis or regular sufferers of swelling in the legs or back. People with a large budget may wish to consider getting a mattress custom made, as mixtures of materials can be combined and individual specifications catered to by specialist companies based throughout the UK.
 - **Thickness and size** – Often associated with comfort, the difficulty with owning a thick mattress on an adjustable bed comes in the folding. Thicker mattresses will not bend correctly with the bed shape, resulting in either a misshapen mattress, damaged mattress (usually sprung) or worse a malfunction with the bed frame itself, all of which can be costly to repair. The ideal thickness is around 8 inches, this way comfort is not compromised too much while maintaining the ability for the bed system to work effectively. Similarly, adjustable bed mattresses need to be measured slightly longer than the frame, to compensate for the loss of length when folded. A few inches should do the trick, but check with the company that you buy from regarding their measurements.

- **Extras** – The mattress has the ability to be more than just for comfort. Modern beds can integrate heating systems and massage machines inside the mattress (foam mattresses only), meaning the user can tailor their bed specifically to personal or medical needs. Other options to consider include a waterproof layer, coating or cover, if accidents are unavoidable and frequent. This can save money on cleaning or replacement, and can be built into the mattress or purchased separately to place on top. Some mattresses accommodate firm sides, useful if falls are an issue during sleep. This needs to be taken into consideration against movement difficulties, which can be hindered further by the added difficulty of getting over the edge of the bed.
4. **Features** – Additional extras are part and parcel of buying an adjustable bed, but it is important that they should only be taken if necessary, as the more features you add, the steeper the costs will be. Adjustable beds will often have the option for various equipment to be added, such as:
- **Extra Motors** – As standard, beds will either be fitted with a single or two motors. A single motor will usually move just the top (head) end of the bed, allowing the user to sit up and watch TV or read a book. Two motors will give independent mobility at both the top (head) and the bottom (feet) end of the bed. This gives the user multiple positions at which to set the bed, ideal for getting in and out, as well as finding a comfortable sleeping position. With double beds, more motors will be required for added functionality, and so check with your dealer how many motors a bed uses, and how each one contributes to the bed's movement. Bear in mind that motors require power, and as a result a greater number of motors or more powerful motors will cost in electricity, although dependent on how, and how frequently, the bed is used, this should not have a huge effect on bills in the home. Some companies offer extra quiet motors, which offer the option of whisper quiet adjustment, which may or may not be an issue depending on the user.
 - **Remote control** – Remote functionality is now standard across the industry, and so most, if not all beds will have a remote control of some kind. Although possibly overlooked, the control will be the part of the bed which is most important aside from its comfort. It will be the device which allows you to set your bed, and adjust it accordingly, meaning you must be able to understand and use it with ease. Large buttons may be easier to use for people with sight problems and arthritis in the hands, although this may have a compromising effect on the number of functions which can be processed through the controller. A wireless system will offer no cables being caught up in the bed, although the downside here may be it is easier lost or dropped. Storage and access is important, and a designated home for the control backed by a wired connection is perhaps the best option for those with memory issues or the simply forgetful. This can also be helped by having a larger controller, although these may compromise comfort in the hand during use.
 - **Back-up power** – A sometimes costly extra, back-up power can be useful in emergency situations. Power cuts can leave users with mobility issues unable to leave the bed, which can be uncomfortable and, in the most extreme cases, dangerous. Back-up power, often supplied by a rechargeable battery, will allow the bed to be used for a set time without connection to a mains electricity supply. This is certainly worth consideration for those with movement difficulties, and in particular those living alone and not in residential care.

- **Wall hugger** – This option is by no means necessary, but useful if you like always having your bedside table within reach. The mattress moves backwards towards the wall behind your head as it raises into the seated position, allowing a more upright seating experience while keeping your essentials within reach at the side of the bed. It allows for the bed to be placed against the wall without the risk of pushing against it.
 - **Massage and heat** – Massage and heat functions will either be a luxurious extra, or recommended for medical purposes. Beds with foam mattresses, as mentioned in the mattress section of this guide, have the means for massage and heating elements to be embedded within the mattress itself, while sprung and other beds will rely on heat and motors underneath the mattress to convey the experience.
 - **Carer height adjustments** – In some circumstances, carers or nurses will need to have greater access to the bed, and this can be granted via hydraulic lifts, which lift the bed vertically. If you have a carer this is something to consider.
5. **Cost** – Every piece of equipment added to the bed, will add further cost to the unit (except in unique circumstances such as company sales or incentives). We recommend you take the information given above, and make a list of needs, ideal extras and do not needs, then begin your search based around your needs. If this comes in under budget, then begin to add ideal extras. It is vital that on a budget, you focus on what you need. Try several types, styles and sizes, before even beginning to make a decision. Remember, in many instances it is an investment in your health as well as comfort, and so if you have a budget, do not be afraid to use all of it. Just be aware to shop thoroughly, as cheaper alternatives will almost always be available.

Buying consideration

Once you have decided on your bed, you will need to consider your options in buying it. There are various methods to buy an adjustable bed, the main ones being - local mobility shop, national dealer or online dealer. Each have their own pros and cons:

Buying Local - Local dealers will usually offer a small selection of beds in store, with the option to bring in beds from suppliers to meet buyer's needs. They are often the most friendly and helpful, although sometimes response times for aftercare can be slow if the shop relies on outside engineers to service its customers. On the plus side they often have good knowledge and advice when buying a bed, and offer a more personal touch.

National Companies - National dealers will naturally have much larger ranges to select from, and Help My Mobility partners will offer a free home demonstration service whereby they will visit you at home, undertake an assessment and then demonstrate a suitable bed. They will have their own service engineers and so response times will be quick to any problems or issues. It is recommended to use national dealers, only if they have a base situated local to you, so you can visit their showrooms.

Online dealer – The best in terms of choice, style, customisation and price, online dealers can afford to be cheaper, with lower overhead costs and regional, if not national bases. It is an ideal place to begin a search for style and features from within your own home. However unless they have a physical shop, showroom or mobile sales team on hand to help, you will in most cases be unable to try before you buy. Although most beds will have a 28 day guarantee or similar returns policy, it is essential to bear in mind whether this is plausible to take the risk of needing to send it back several times. A word on warning if you are buying online, although the prices may be tempting, always consider the after sales

Whoever you decide to buy from you should consider:

Delivery and setup – When the bed is delivered, it is important that someone oversees its construction (if required) and to demonstrate its features and operation. It is important at this point to ask any questions you may have, or put forward any reservations you have about the product or service. You should receive any additional information you need by this point

Warranty – Although most beds are built to last, and often do, it is important to make sure the bed has a comprehensive warranty. This is so that an engineer will come and fix any problem for you as opposed to a 'return to the manufacturer' warranty which will involve sending the bed back to be repaired or replaced. Comprehensive warranty will also mean they send a replacement immediately if it cannot be fixed on site. Warranty usually lasts for a minimum of ten years, however check this figure when purchasing.

After sales service - A good after sales service can be essential for peace of mind. Having a customer service advisor at the end of a phone, and a quick response time from engineers is worth seeking out, as should the bed fail or an issue arise, it will be dealt with swiftly and efficiently.

Paying for your Adjustable Bed

Having decided on your bed, and where you are going to get it from, it is worth considering how you plan on paying for it. Most companies offer payment agreements, whereby you can pay a certain amount per week/month. These deals can be handy if you have been struggling to save enough money to buy a bed outright. They also allow you to perhaps buy a more expensive model, giving you extra time to get the money together. Perfect if your budget is small or doesn't stretch to cover all of your requirements. Just be careful to avoid high interest rates, and research the company you are buying from. Help My Mobility's partners all offer reasonable payment plans, and would not endorse any product or company if it is not to the benefit of you, the consumer.

Buying Second Hand - Another option to consider, is to buy second hand. You will find much cheaper beds, and a good choice, with the advantage of a previous owner who will hopefully be more than willing to help you with it. Remember to try before you buy and look for all of the same features you would on shop bought bed. The main issue is checking it still works, that its batteries and motors are well serviced and in good working order. It is also worth trying to secure a warranty if purchasing from a shop or dealer.

After the Sale - Make sure to read all manuals and information before using the bed, and become familiar with the controls and mechanisms before sitting in it. Ensure the bed is well maintained, and tested regularly if not used for long periods. Ask for an annual service check from your supplier and they should oblige.

Welcome to Help My Mobility buyers guide for riser chair. We have written this guide to help you in purchasing the right riser chair for your needs. Please note that this guide is for information purposes only and you should seek medical and professional advice before buying.

What is a Riser Chair?

Riser Recliners are specialist chairs to help those suffering from ailments that affect the user's ability to get in, sit in, or get out from their ordinary chair.

A riser chairs offers the user the ability to adjust their seating position by raising and lower both the top end (head end) and the bottom end (leg end) to obtain a suitable sitting position. On the majority of riser chairs both the top and bottom ends can be adjusted independently to give endless seating positions. The chair is power by electrical motors and operated by a remote control to give ease of use. Modern chairs are often fitted with extra features such as heat and massage.

How should I approach buying a Riser Recliner Chair?

A Riser Recliner Chair can be an expensive investment for anyone, so not only does it need to be purposeful, it needs to be practical and comfortable.

Benefits and purpose of a Riser Recliner Chair

The majority of chair users we speak to purchase a riser chair for one or a combination of the following reasons:

1. **Comfort** – With the ability to adjust the chair a comfortable sitting position can be obtained, making watching TV or reading a book more comfortable.
2. **Ease of Mobility** – Sometimes getting in and out of a standard chair can be an issue, with a riser chair this can be made easier by raising the chair so the user is in a near standing position.
3. **Medical** – By having the ability to adjust the head and leg levels can often help with medical conditions such as swollen ankles, back pain and circulation problems.

What should I look for in a Riser Recliner Chair?

Much like shopping for a regular armchair or sofa, Riser's need to both look and feel good, and the user needs to be able to operate its controls easily and comfortably. Style, size, height and comfort all factor in to the decision making process when deciding on a chair.

1. **Style** – As a piece of furniture, the chair needs to blend into its environment in a homely manner. Luckily there is a wide range of available Risers, in both leather and fabric designs to choose from. With the majority of Rising Recliners, you are paying for the electronic motors and components, with the fabric covering them a relatively small expense in comparison.

2. **Height/Size** – The height of the seat is one of the crucial factors when deciding on a Riser Chair. It must be at the optimum height to allow safe transition when getting into, and out of the seat. Too high and you will not be able to get onto the seat, and will find you cannot touch the floor when trying to get out of it. If it is set too low, then you may not be able to bend down to sit in the seat comfortably, and similarly may not receive enough support or leverage when trying to stand from sitting. Ideally the height needs to be the same as the measurement between the heel (bare foot) and the back of the knee joint. This allows for optimum height when getting into, and out of, the seated position. As for the size of the chair itself, there are a range of fits between petite and large to meet individual requirements.
3. **Cushioning** – There is a wide selection of materials available when choosing the cushioning of a chair, each with a different feel and comfort objective.
 - **Foam** - Foam comes in all shapes, sizes and densities, and so makes it the most popular choice. The density of the foam is the key element, as this affects its firmness level, with low density foam feeling soft, while high density foam is much more rigid. Choosing the right one for you comes down to personal preference and is often influenced by factors such as a person's height and weight.
 - **Visco** – More widely known as Memory Foam, Visco is useful for those who could benefit from minor support. Like with mattresses made from this material, the body sinks into the foam, offering a unique comforting feel, with little pressure applied to the body. Like regular foam, there are various densities available, and suitability will depend on individual taste and experience. Heat sensitive 'Double Visco' is also available, and provides a greater degree of pressure redistribution than ordinary Visco.
 - **Coolgel** – Coolgel is a Proprietary Silicon Polymer designed to have the same physical characteristics as human fat tissue. It distributes itself like a liquid, but as a solid will not leak or flow if the seat is damaged. It maintains its properties well, remaining cool and has minimal heat or moisture build up. It can be a useful aid for sufferers of poor circulation.
 - **Theragel** – This combines both gel and foam. The gel sits between two layers of the foam, which are forced together during use, with the gel acting as the distributor of pressure. It is recommended for those needing a firm support.
4. **Backrest** – There are various styles of back rest, each with a different purpose and support. A matter of personal choice, there are four main arrangements to choose from:
 - **Button Back** – A traditional looking back rest, it comprises a single cushion buttoned in certain spots to create a firm yet pleasant feel. Softer versions are also available.
 - **Waterfall** – Typically three pillows positioned one above the other, this allows for adjustable comfort levels and each pillow can be modified to create a unique, individual set up. Be warned that due to the nature of the padding used in these chairs, the back will more than likely flatten over time.
 - **Roll Back** – Similar to the Waterfall, this also has three cushions. However these are built into the back, and will often give a firm support.

5. **Positioning** – It is important to take into account the various positions a chair can reach, as some may offer complete horizontal functionality to allow for sleeping as well as relaxing. Again this is dependent on personal preference and the intentions of the user. Be aware that while most chairs allow for sleeping, they are not designed to be slept in as a bed. Riser Chairs can also come with the option of a fixed seating position to improve posture and prevent pressure build up in certain areas of the body. Leg elevation can also differ from model to model, and Risers are often more adaptable in this way than standard recliner chairs. The adjustability of a chair will boil down to how many motors it uses (see features section).
6. **Features** – As with most mobility products, Riser Recliners offer several additional extras to enhance the ownership experience, and improve comfort. They are all worth considering but can be costly extras, so keep your budget in mind when shopping for them. Riser Recliners will often have the option for:
 - **Extra Motors** – Standard Risers will have either a single motor or dual motor set up, and this will affect how adjustable the chair is. Single motors will recline the chair in one motion, moving both the headrest and footrest at the same time while the chair leans back to a forty-five degree angle. This is the most simple, and ideal for those wanting a basic recline action, or if the user will have difficulty operating a machine with multiple functions (for example someone with dementia). On the other hand, users who want customisable positions and complete control should opt for dual motors. These will mean both the head/back rest and foot rest are independent, ideal for just putting feet up to rest or for finding the perfect reclined position.
 - **Anti-Entrapment** – This function is ideal for anyone with pets or small children, as it prevents the chair from trapping anything inside its frame. Should a child or pet crawl under the chair, sensors will detect a resistance to its motion and immediately prevent the frame from closing. Only a small number of companies offer the device as standard, others offer to fit the device to an existing chair for a cost.
 - **Remote Control** – The remote control is an essential part of any purchase you make, as it is the interface with which the user interacts. Variations include wired or wireless, which should be thought about if the user is susceptible to losing or misplacing the remote frequently. Storage is another dilemma, and installing a pouch or area for the controller to live is recommended. The size of the remote is important, but dependent on personal preference. Too small and it may be easily misplaced or offer limited functionality, while too big may be difficult for some to hold or confusing because of the large number of buttons.
 - **Back-up power** – Battery packs are widely available on most riser recliners. They are useful in emergency situations, and allow the user to carry on using the chair even during power cuts. This can be crucial should the chair be in use if a power cut occurs, as the owner may not be able to get up from the locked position. The option of a second power supply is recommended for those who live alone or who are highly immobile.

- **Wall-Hugger** – A wall-hugger option means that the chair can be placed within inches of the wall, without the worry of the recliner touching it. They are designed to rise the back and move the base of the chair to prevent damage to walls or fittings, without needing to move the chair or position it in an unnatural position.
 - **Massage and Heat** – Massage and heat functions add extra luxury to a chair, whether for pleasure or medical purposes. Chairs will vary in the way these functions are integrated, some will have these elements woven into the material and cushions, and more basic versions will have them sat on the frame underneath the cushions.
7. **Cost** – Chairs can be costly pieces of equipment, and so plan accordingly and budget a sensible amount to spend. Extras will cost extra, and so decide on what you need before you begin shopping.

Buying Consideration

When you have decided on the perfect chair for you, there are several different things to consider before you buy. There are many ways to buy a Riser Recliner Chair, the main ones being – local mobility shop, national dealer or online dealer. Each have their pros and cons:

Buying Local - Local dealers will usually offer a small selection of chairs in store, with the option to bring in more from suppliers to meet buyer's needs. They are often the most friendly and helpful, although sometimes response times for aftercare can be slow if the shop relies on outside engineers to service its customers. On the plus side they often have good knowledge and advice when buying mobility products, and offer a more personal touch.

National Companies – National dealers will naturally have much larger ranges to select from, and Help My Mobility partners will offer a free home demonstration service whereby they will visit you at home, undertake an assessment and then demonstrate a suitable chair for your needs. They will have their own service engineers and so response times will be quick to any problems or issues. It is recommended to use national dealers, only if they have a base situated local to you, so you can visit their showrooms before buying, and to have help available just around the corner if required.

Online dealer – The best in terms of choice, style, customisation and price, online dealers can afford to be cheaper, with lower overhead costs and regional, if not national bases. It is an ideal place to begin a search for style and features from within your own home. However unless they have a physical shop, showroom or mobile sales team on hand to help, you will in most cases be unable to try before you buy. Although most Risers will have a 28 day guarantee or similar returns policy, it is essential to bear in mind whether this is plausible to take the risk of needing to send it back several times. A word on warning if you are buying online, although the prices may be tempting, always consider the after sales service and warranty offered for that cost as well. Some national companies will offer discount sales online but not in store, so make sure to take advantage of these where possible.

Whoever you decide to buy from you should consider:

Delivery and setup – When the chair is delivered, it is important that someone oversees its construction (if required) and to demonstrate its features and operation. It is important at this point to ask any questions you may have, or put forward any reservations you have about the product or service. You should receive any additional information you need by this point.

Warranty – Although most Risers are built to last, and often do, it is important to make sure the chair has a comprehensive warranty. This is so that an engineer will come and fix any problem for you as opposed to a 'return to the manufacturer' warranty which will involve sending the chair back to be repaired or replaced. Comprehensive warranty will also mean they send a replacement immediately if it cannot be fixed on site. Warranty usually lasts for a substantial time, so a minimum of ten years should be standard. However check this figure when purchasing.

After sales service – A good after sales service can be essential for peace of mind. Having a customer service advisor at the end of a phone, and a quick response time from engineers is worth seeking out, as should the chair fail or an issue arise, it will be dealt with swiftly and efficiently.

Paying for your Riser Recliner Chair

Having decided on your Riser, and where you are going to get it from, it is worth considering how you plan on paying for it. Most companies offer payment agreements, whereby you can pay a certain amount per week/month. These deals can be handy if you have been struggling to save enough money to buy a chair outright. They also allow you to perhaps buy a more expensive Riser, giving you extra time to get the money together. Perfect if your budget is small or doesn't stretch to cover all of your requirements. Just be careful to avoid high interest rates, and research the company you are buying from. Help My Mobility's partners all offer reasonable payment plans, and would not endorse any product or company if it is not to the benefit of you, the consumer.

Buying Second Hand

Another option to consider, is to buy second hand. You will find much cheaper chairs, and a good choice, with the advantage of a previous owner who will hopefully be more than willing to help you with it. Remember to try before you buy and look for all of the same features you would on a new chair. The main issue is checking it still works, that its batteries and motors are well serviced and in good working order. It is also worth trying to secure a warranty if purchasing from a shop or dealer.

After the Sale

Make sure to read all manuals and information before using the chair, and become familiar with the controls and mechanisms before sitting in it. Ensure the chair is well maintained, and tested regularly if not used for long periods. Ask for an annual service check from your supplier and they should oblige.

Independence, convenience and freedom: just three of the things that a mobility scooter can bring to your life. With the mobility scooter market now offering a greater range of choice than ever before, you're certain to find a mobility scooter out there which suits your personal circumstances.

However, such a large selection can also be daunting; after all, with so much to choose from, how can you be sure that the choice you're making is the right one?

Our comprehensive buying guide should help. Mobility scooters come in all shape, sizes, capabilities and specifications, so we've put together this handy, step-by-step guide to cut through the jargon and help you make the right choice. We find many people look at the price of a scooter, rather than if it will suit their needs.

What will you use your scooter for?

The value of a mobility scooter is derived directly from the effect the machine has on your quality of life. How often you plan to use the scooter, how far you plan to go and what sort of loads you plan to carry; these are all factors that affect what type of mobility scooter you need. Determining your usage requirements is the first step in purchasing a new scooter.

1. **Manoeuvring in shops and small spaces** – For use in tight spaces, a 3 wheeled scooter with a small turning circle is required. Purchasing a fold-up scooter will allow you to put the scooter in the car when your shopping trip is finished.
2. **Short trips** – If your planned usage mainly involves trips to the local shops, visiting friends or family round the corner or getting out and about in your local area, a 3 or 4 wheel, medium battery range, 4mph scooter is ideal for pavement use.
3. **Long trips** – Visiting friends a few miles away, taking your dog for a long walk or running long errands are all classed as long trips. For trips like these you're going to need something a little more heavy duty. A 4 wheel scooter with a large mileage range and a sturdy frame is perfect for this.
4. **Road Use** – The ability to use your mobility scooter on the road is useful for longer trips. Remember that in order to use your scooter on the road it must be capable of travelling 8mph and must be fitted with safety lights by law.
5. **Traveling on rough paths** – If you're planning on doing some off-roading, you're going to need a scooter that can cope with rougher terrain. Suspension, padded seating, powerful batteries and a sturdy frame are all features that will make rough paths a dream to ride upon as you glide along. Remember to always be careful when you go off road.
6. **Portability** – If you want a scooter that you can dismantle and put in the boot of your car, the portability of the unit is something worth bearing in mind also. Look out for mobility scooters which are easily disassembled into lightweight components; these scooters are available in a variety of classes.

Types of Mobility Scooter

Mobility scooters can be divided into two main groups: 3-wheel and 4-wheel:

3-wheel scooters provide excellent manoeuvrability and are agile enough to handle small spaces like the interiors of shops with ease.

4-wheel scooters offer greater stability and are more suited to outdoor use.

However, this is a huge generalisation. Within each group there are a wealth of different features and options that make particular scooters better suited to certain situations. We've listed a few here:

1. **Speed** – Any road-legal scooter will have a top speed of 8mph, while any scooter limited to pavement usage will have an upper speed limit of 4mph. This is the basic distinction in terms of speed. Road-legal scooters are in the "class 3" specification. These scooters will usually feature a variable speed setting, allowing users to limit the scooter to 4mph for pavement use, before adjusting to 8mph when road usage is required. These scooters must be registered with the DVLA.
2. **Portability** – Many scooters boast specific design features that make them easy to disassemble and store. This also makes them easy load into the boot of the car; a vital function if you need to take your scooter on a car journey.
3. **Ruggedness** – Scooters are available that make off-road journeys possible. While steep slopes and dangerous terrain should be avoided; high ground clearance, a good suspension, a robust frame and a high level of stability make travelling on terrain such as rough paths and tracks easy.

Features

Lights – If you're travelling at night, lights are strongly recommended. If you're travelling on the road – day or night – lights are a legal requirement! Invest in head lamps, red lights on the rear of the scooter and a set of indicators before venturing out on the road.

Swivel seat – If you have mobility problems, climbing on and off a mobility scooter can be painful and difficult. A swivel seat can help with this. By rotating the user's body, a swivel seat eliminates any awkward twisting motion associated with getting on and off a scooter and could make using the Scooter far easier for you.

Suspension – If you're traveling on rough paths and tracks, or are going to be travelling long distances on your scooter on a regular basis, a decent suspension is required for your comfort and convenience. Look for models with front and back suspension for enhanced comfort.

Charging – If you're planning on travelling a long way between battery charges, you are going to need a scooter with a decent range. This is something you need to consider before you finalise your scooter purchase. Another factor to be considered is how long the battery takes to charge and how easy it can be connected to the charging lead. Charging leads which connect quickly and simply to the scooter will be particularly useful to users with arthritic complaints or other problems with their hands. Ensure you have a safe and secure place to charge your scooter.

Freewheel facility – Freewheel mode allows a mobility scooter to be pushed if necessary, a useful feature in some situations. Some transport companies will only allow scooters on board if they have this function.

Carrying ability – There's no point in purchasing a mobility scooter to help with your shopping if there's nowhere to store the bags. Have a think about your carrying requirements before you make a purchase, this will ensure that you select a scooter that best suits your needs. While baskets and bags are available both before and after purchase, the power of your scooter will be affected when carrying heavy loads of shopping, so bear this in mind if travelling long distance, or up steep inclines.

Where will you get your scooter from?

Mobility scooters are available from a variety of sources. They can be purchased from a local mobility shop, a national supplier or from an online source. Each of these sources comes with its own pros and cons:

Local Mobility Shop:

- Pros:** You will be able to see and try the unit out before you buy.
You will have the convenience of visiting a shop local to you.
The shop will be nearby should anything go wrong.
This will help with any warranty claims.
You will be able to speak to someone face to face at all stages of the process.
- Cons:** A mobility shop will not have the range of choice available online.
The mobility shop may not be able to offer you the best price or payment option.
Their advice may not be independent.

A National Supplier:

- Pros:** Will have more choice in terms of model.
May be able to offer a better price than a local shop.
May have multiple branches
Help My Mobility partners will offer at home demonstration
Help My Mobility partners will provide full assembly on delivery
- Cons:** Non Help My Mobility partners may not offer a demonstration
May not offer collection if something goes wrong.
Make sure to check both of these things!!

Online:

- Pros:** Offers a greater range of choice than any other source.
Allows buyers to quickly and easily browse competitors to find you the best deal.
Will usually deliver the piece of mobility equipment direct to you.
- Cons:** Will not always offer a demonstration.
Will not always offer an at home warranty.
You may need to return the scooter to the company for warranty claims

Whichever option you choose, be sure to insist on a no-obligation demonstration and a warranty of at least a year on your chosen mobility scooter.

All good quality mobility equipment providers should offer both of these things and Help My Mobility will only put you in touch with providers that can guarantee this.

The Demonstration & Test Drive

Receiving a demonstration is a key part of purchasing a new mobility scooter. After all, how will you know if you've chosen the best scooter for your needs unless you try it out first?

At Help My Mobility we believe that any mobility equipment provider worth their salt should provide you with a no-obligation demonstration before you buy. As such, we only deal with companies that can offer this service.

But the demonstration should not be a passive process; a potential buyer should be aware of the things they need to look out for during the demonstration.

- Comfort:** Take a ride on the mobility scooter and try to imagine riding it over longer distances. Is it comfy enough to allow such usage? Is your back supported adequately? Do you have any other concerns?
- Compatibility:** There's no point in acquiring a new mobility scooter if it is too large to fit through your front gate. Ensure that the mobility scooter is compatible with the dimensions of your home before you finalise the purchase. Will you be able to store it properly? Can you enter and exit the property safely and easily?
- Warranty:** Take the opportunity to get confirmation from the representative that the company do indeed offer an extensive warranty on their product. Also, enquire about what you need to do in the event that a repair is required?

Good quality mobility equipment companies should collect the scooter from you with the minimum of hassle to yourself. It is also worth asking whether the company will provide a replacement scooter if yours needs a repair; something that can be vital on such an important piece of equipment.

Paying for your Mobility Scooter

Buy Outright

So you've analysed your usage requirements, decided on what type of scooter best suits your needs, and now you're ready to buy. The most common method of purchasing a mobility scooter is to use your savings. This has its advantages; it allows you to purchase a scooter outright, with no credit agreement and no long term repayment plan. Once the scooter is yours, it's yours, and no one can take it away from you.

However, buying a scooter outright also has its disadvantages. The first disadvantage is that it will very often completely wipe out your savings. A good quality scooter could cost you well into the £1,000s, meaning that all but the most disciplined of savers amongst us will find this method of payment a struggle.

Allowing us to put you in touch with a reputable mobility scooter provider is the safest way to purchase a scooter outright. We only deal with companies that meet our rigorous standards, so you can be sure that any company we refer you to will offer only the very best in service.

Ask the company for a demonstration on delivery. This will allow you to get to grips with your new mobility scooter in a familiar environment and ensure that the unit you purchase is the ideal one for you.

Payment Agreement

Paying for a mobility scooter outright may mean having to settle for a cheaper machine to suit your budget, rather than your mobility needs. Purchasing one on a payment agreement allows you to obtain the ideal scooter for your requirements, without compromising on price.

You may have been planning to save up for a new scooter, going without a unit until you can afford to purchase it outright. If this is the case, buying on finance will allow you to get your hands on your new scooter sooner, without having to wait until you've saved the requisite capital.

Purchase Second Hand

Despite the advantages of a purchase on finance, some customers may still feel understandably uncomfortable with this method of acquiring a scooter. If this is the case, purchasing a second hand mobility scooter might be the best option for you. Remember to check the battery if the scooter has been unused for a period.

Second hand scooters will be cheaper, but you should be careful to ensure that the machine you purchase is in adequate condition. Never agree to purchase a scooter you haven't had chance to see and try out in person, and always secure a warranty for the scooter to protect in the event that anything goes wrong.

Get Insured and Registered

Category 1 + 2 scooters, i.e. scooters designated for pavement use and limited to 4mph, DO NOT need to be registered by the DVLA and are exempt from road tax.

Category 3 scooters, i.e. scooters designated for use on the road and limited to 8mph, DO need to be registered with the DVLA and are subject to road tax.

It is both highly dangerous and illegal to operate a pavement scooter 4mph on the road, as it will lack the power and durability to cope with this kind of usage.

As for insurance, there is currently no legal requirement for mobility scooter users to get their machines insured, however it is highly recommended that anyone owning a mobility scooter takes out a comprehensive insurance plan on the vehicle. Consider the advantages of third party liability cover in the case of damage or injury to a person or their property.

The spate of thefts and accidents recently have underlined just how important this is.

After Purchase

A mobility scooter is a life changing piece of equipment, but care still needs to be taken to ensure safe operation. Follow the tips below to ensure that you get the best out of your scooter and stay safe while out and about.

1. Get to know your scooter, the controls, test drive and read the manual

This is basic advice which seems obvious, but remember to become familiar with your purchase before you use it extensively.

2. Plan your Trip

This might seem like a minor concern, but in reality it can be the difference between safe scooter operation and a nasty accident. As you're likely to be using your scooter within your local area, getting to know the best route to take to the shops or to the house of a friend shouldn't be too difficult.

Avoid poorly lit stretches of road, particularly if pavements are narrow, poorly maintained or non-existent. Not only does this help eliminate the risk of a road accident, it also helps to ensure that you are not a victim of crime.

Avoid rugged terrain and unpaved areas if you do not own a specifically designed heavy duty mobility scooter, such as the Horizon Mobility Aztec or Electric Mobility Rascal 889. Operating a normal mobility scooter on this sort of terrain can result in a tipping hazard or in both scooter and driver becoming stranded.

In times of cold weather, always wrap up warm with a winter coat, hat, scarf and gloves. This will keep you warm in the unlikely event of a breakdown. Avoid wearing loose fitting clothes or anything that could get caught up in the wheels of the scooter.

Other precautions, like a hi-visibility jacket and lights fitted to your scooter, ensure that you remain visible when out and about, helping to keep you safe from harm. It is worth bearing in mind that, if you use your scooter on the road, you must have lights fitted to the front and back by law.

3. Be Fit To Drive

While lower classifications of scooter – i.e. those not designated for road usage – are not bound by the same restrictions that other drivers must adhere to, it is still highly recommended that you ensure you are fit to drive before you leave the house.

If you have been feeling tired, dizzy or faint, do not climb aboard your mobility scooter under any circumstances. Not only are you putting yourself at risk, you also run the risk of injuring a member of the public if you should suddenly lose control of the scooter.

Never operate your mobility scooter if you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs – legal or illegal. If your scooter is designated for road usage, this is a criminal offence.

4. Take Care

Chances are you will be using your scooter for shopping trips, which is fine, but don't overload the machine. This can cause stability issues, problems with braking, problems with steering and potential structural weaknesses. The literature that comes with your scooter will have definitive information regarding the weight limits of the machine; these should be adhered to at all times. If you are unsure or have lost this information, contact your manufacturer or consult our Scooter Makes and Models page.

There is currently no legal requirement to take a test before you climb aboard a mobility scooter, therefore it is up to you to ensure that you take due care and diligence when you're out on the road. Always be aware of what is around you and make sure you keep your wits about you when operating your scooter.

5. Use your Mobility Scooter on the right setting

Mobility scooters that can be operated on roads will also have a variable speed function. This allows users to vary their speed so that the scooter can be used on pavements as well as on the road. Where possible, it is advisable to use your scooter on the pavement rather than on the road, but you must have your scooter set to a top speed of 4mph. Piloting your scooter on the pavement at a greater speed than this is not only dangerous, it is illegal!

Maintenance and Servicing

A good quality mobility scooter should require minimal maintenance and servicing. However, in order to keep the device in good nick, it is important to get it checked over once a year. These annual checks usually take around two hours.

Minor maintenance procedures – such as tightening the seat or tiller – will be covered in the manual that comes with your scooter, but anything further than this will need to be carried out by a trained Professional.

Basic problems, such as the scooter being stuck in sleep or power-save mode, can be solved by completely turning the scooter off and then on again. In order to maximise the life of your battery, only plug the scooter in to charge when the battery is almost completely flat, particularly in the first few weeks of operation. This keeps the battery healthy for longer and will optimise your enjoyment of the machine.

Welcome to Help My Mobility buyers guide for easy access showers. We have written this guide to help you in purchasing the right easy access shower for your needs.

Please note that this guide is for information purposes only and you should seek medical and professional advice before buying.

What is an Easy Access Shower?

An easy access shower is a shower with low lip or level shower tray. This system makes entering and exiting the shower much simpler and helps remove the risk of slipping or falling. Level access tray can be accessed by a wheelchair.

Benefits and purpose of Easy Access Showers

The majority of users we speak to purchase an easy access shower for one or a combination of the following reasons:

1. **Safety:** For those who suffer with limited mobility stepping over the side of a traditional shower tray can often be difficult and dangerous. An easy access shower will remove this danger.
2. **Independence:** Having the ability to shower without the need of assistance from a carer greatly improved the users' independence.

What should I look for in an Easy Access Shower?

When considering buying an Easy Access Shower, there are certain features to consider before browsing and buying. These include the type of shower basin and screen, whether or not a seat is required, plumbing for waste and pumps, and whether you require other accessories for example a rail or non-slip mat. It is recommended to consult a professional plumber/fitter to find out which options you have available in your bathroom.

1. **Style** – Showers of this nature must be practical as they are specialist fittings. Starting with the basin, decide on how high the step into the shower needs to be. There are four standard shower tray designs:
 - **Complete Level Access** – These provide a step free entrance, and consist of a marginally lowered basin fitted into the floor. A regular bath/shower style plastic is used, with familiar grip patterns and drainage to a normal shower.
 - **Low Level Access** – With a slightly raised step, low level access trays sit on top of the floor, meaning high risk users may wish to avoid this style. The step in is minimal, but this can make a lot of difference to someone with mobility issues. These will often be easiest to fit and offer the most conventional style for drainage.
 - **Wet Floor** – This is the most popular style, as it is seen to be trendy and modern, and also offers the most appropriate solution in terms of a completely flat transition in and out. Both tiled and non-slip options are available, the latter ideal if stability or frailty is an issue.

- **Traditional** – The original style of the easy access shower, the traditional basin consists of a raised edge lowered at an entrance point where the user can move in and out of the shower across a minimally raised side.
2. **Screen or Curtains** – When considering the design and practicality of your new shower, choosing between a screen or curtains can be a tough decision. Screens offer a slight advantage in terms of safety, stopping or softening a fall better than curtains, but on the negative side may require more maintenance than curtains, which are easily replaceable. Curtains may offer more flexibility if the user requires a carer or nurse, as they allow both easier and greater access to and from the basin. This choice is largely down to personal preference, as well as circumstance.
 3. **Seat** – Shower seats are a great way for those with mobility issues to relax while cleaning themselves. Recommended if standing or twisting is painful, seats offer support in a discreet manner and come in all shapes and sizes.
 4. **Plumbing solutions** – Best recommended through a professional, consider having to factor in additional plumbing to allow for your new shower. Water may need to be accessed or drained in a different way, and so finding out whether this is required early will be to your benefit when budgeting.
 5. **Accessories** – Customisable and available in most hardware or home stores, bathroom accessories can really benefit users of walk in showers. Handrails are advised for installation to add extra support and peace of mind to users, and are relatively inexpensive. Bath mats are also something to consider, especially if the floor is not non-slip.

Alternatively, you may feel you wish to consider a traditional bath tub, in which case see the section on Walk-in-Baths or visit the bathing pages of our website www.help-my-mobility.org/walk-in-baths.htm

Buying Consideration

There are various methods to buy an easy access shower, the main ones being - local mobility shop or bathroom store, national dealer or online dealer. Each have their own pros and cons:

Buying Local – Local dealers will usually offer a small selection of showers in store, with the option to bring in more products from suppliers to meet buyer's needs. They are often the most friendly and helpful, although sometimes response times for aftercare can be slow if the shop relies on outside engineers to service its customers. On the plus side they often have good knowledge and advice when buying an easy access shower, and offer a more personal touch. However finding local suppliers of walk in showers may not be easy as they are normally sold by larger national bathroom companies, although specialist shops will be scattered around the country.

National Companies – National dealers will naturally have much larger ranges to select from, and Help My Mobility work with national dealers who offer a home presentation service whereby they will visit you at home, undertake an assessment and then demonstrate suitable showers. Nationwide suppliers will have their own service engineers and so response times will be quick to fix any problems or issues. It is recommended to visit their showrooms before making up your mind.

Online dealer – The best in terms of choice, style, customisation and price, online dealers can afford to be cheaper, with lower overhead costs and regional, if not national bases. It is an ideal place to begin a search for style and features from within your own home. However unless they have a physical shop, showroom or mobile sales team on hand to help, you will in most cases be unable to see the Product before you buy. Although most showers will have a 28 day guarantee or similar returns policy, it is essential to bear in mind whether this is plausible to take the risk of needing to send it back several times, and worse damaging fixtures and fittings in your bathroom which could be costly. A word on warning if you are buying online, although the prices may be tempting, always consider the after sales service and warranty offered for that cost as well. Some national companies will offer discount sales online but not in store, so make sure to take advantage of these where possible.

Whoever you decide to buy from you should consider:

Project management – Ensure the installation of the shower is overseen from start to finish for peace of mind. It is important that someone oversees its construction and to demonstrate its features and operation. It is appropriate at this point to ask any questions you may have, or put forward any reservations you have about the product or service. You should receive any additional information you need by this point.

Warranty – Although most showers are built to last, and often do, it is vital to make sure that it has a comprehensive warranty. This is so that an engineer will come and fix any problem for you as opposed to a 'return to the manufacturer' warranty which will involve sending the shower parts back to be repaired or replaced. Comprehensive warranty will also mean they send replacement parts immediately if it cannot be fixed on site. Warranty usually lasts for a minimum of ten years, however check this figure when purchasing.

After sales service – A good after sales service can be essential for peace of mind. Having a customer service advisor at the end of a phone, and a quick response time from engineers is worth seeking out, as should the shower fail or an issue arise, it will be dealt with swiftly and efficiently.

Paying for your Easy Access Shower

Having decided on your shower, and where you are going to get it from, it is worth considering how you plan on paying for it. Most companies offer payment agreements, whereby you can pay a certain amount per week/month. These deals can be handy if you have been struggling to save enough money to buy one outright. They also allow you to perhaps spend more than you could afford, giving you extra time to get the money together. Perfect if your budget is small or doesn't stretch to cover all of your requirements. Just be careful to avoid high interest rates, and research the company you are buying from. Help My Mobility's partners all offer reasonable payment plans, and would not endorse any product or company if it is not to the benefit of you, the consumer.

After the Sale

Make sure to understand how the shower works, and become familiar with the access point and accessories before standing or sitting in it. Ensure the shower is well maintained, and cleaned regularly to prevent mould or Lime-scale build up. Ask for an annual service check from your supplier and they should oblige to check the shower is in optimum working condition.

Welcome to Help My Mobility buyers guide for stair lifts. We have written this guide to help you in purchasing the right stair lift for your needs. Please note that this guide is for information purposes only and you should seek medical and professional advice before buying.

What is a Stair Lift?

A stair lift offers a way for those with limited mobility to navigate stairs using a mechanical platform or seat. It will often consist of a rail along the side of the stair case, and a fold-away chair which moves along it, taking the user up and down accordingly.

What are the benefits of owning a Stair Lift?

When moving freely up and down the stairs becomes an issue, a stair lift can offer:

1. **Safety:** For those with limited movement, particularly in the back or legs, climbing a single step can be dangerous due to the reduced balancing capabilities of the body. The stair lift provides a safe and secure means of ascending or descending a staircase.
2. **Independence:** Freedom is the foundation of modern life, and with a stair lift you get just that. No longer will you require assistance moving between floors in your own home, and the stress and pain of completing such a task will be a thing of the past.
3. **Comfort:** Climbing the stairs will no longer be a painful experience, but one which will become enjoyable.

When buying a stair lift there are various factors which must be considered:

Will a Stair Lift fit?

The first question which you should ask is whether a stair lift will fit your staircase. You will need to consider the width of the staircase and also the number of bends. If you have a very narrow staircase (less than 60cm) it may not be possible to fit a standard lift, however some manufacturers have perched stair lifts to solve this issue. If your stairs are made up of one straight continuous stairwell you can normally purchase a straight stair lift. Should you have a bend in the stairwell or a change of direction via a landing then a curved stair lift is often the best solution. In most circumstances, the curved stair lift track will have to be manufactured specifically to meet the shape of your stairs. As a result curved stair lifts are generally more expensive to purchase and will take slightly longer to install from point of ordering. It is sometimes more economical to fit two straight stair lifts if appropriate. The only way to determine if a lift is viable and gain an accurate cost quotation is to have survey carried out. This survey allows the company to measure up and assess the condition of the staircase and access to a power supply. All stair lift companies will undertake an obligation free survey - this is essential to determine if a lift is suitable. Call us on 0845 838 7085, and we will arrange a survey for you, free of charge.

What features do you need?

Once you have established that a stair lift will fit your staircase you may want to consider which features you may require, such features include:

1. **Weight** – All stair lifts will have a maximum weight capacity, so check if you feel this may potentially be an issue before buying.
2. **Remote Control** – Remote controls come with a range of features, and so consider the complete functionality of your lift before buying. Features include being able to call the stair lift up or down depending on your position in the house, park features where it will fold away at either the top or bottom of the stairs.
3. **Safety Features** – Modern stair lifts will include safety features such as built in safety sensors. These will detect anything in the path of the lift and bring the chair to a smooth halt. As standard stair lifts will have buckle seatbelts, and most have lockable on/off switches for when the chair is not in use.
4. **Swivel Seat** – Swivel seats allow full access to and from the platform when sitting. They are useful for getting on and off the lift safely both at the top and bottom of the stairs.
5. **Soft Start Stop Function** – This will mean that the stair lift will pull away and stop smoothly, with no juddering or heavy movements which would make the experience uncomfortable.
6. **Hinged Track** - There are also options for a hinged track, to prevent door blockages or trip hazards, and these can be controlled via remote function.
7. **Battery Back Up** – Many lifts come with a battery backup supply, kept charged to allow the stair lift to be operated in case of a power cut or failure, particularly useful for those living alone in emergency circumstances.

Buying

When the decision has been made to purchase the stair lift there are various factors to consider:

1. **Who to buy from?** – There are three main avenues to follow when purchasing a stair lift:
 - Direct from manufacturers – Manufacturers will visit you before you buy to provide a free (just check this on the phone), no obligations assessment and will measure up and help you decide on the right staircase for you.
 - Via resellers – Resellers will offer second hand stair lifts which have been reconditioned to be as good as new. They will be cheaper, but check with the company that they offer extended warranty and guarantee schemes, to be sure it will work as described. These companies will be largely independent, but will be experts in their own right in dealing with second hand stair lifts and other mobility products.
 - Via your local mobility shop – A good port of call for local advice and knowledge, local dealers offer exceptional customer services. While they usually deal with the manufacturers directly, some will have independent engineers who they rely on for installations and servicing, and very occasionally you will find better deals as manufacturers will have set costs and a standardised quoting system making prices less flexible.

2. **Prices and Quotes** – The type and size of the stair lift you require, as well as the length of track needed to be installed will directly affect the price of your quote. Straight lifts offer the cheapest solution, because curved lifts will need to be tailor made depending on the style of your stair case. Short term options are available with rented stair lifts, although not for curved staircases due to the individual nature of each one. This can be a helpful if disabled friends or relatives are staying for a prolonged period, or if an injury such as a broken leg hip restricts movement until it has healed (usually a few months).
3. **Warranty** – Check to see what warranty is offered in terms of duration and what is covered. A minimum of 12 months warranty should be requested and you need to be aware of ongoing servicing and maintenance costs. Many customers choose to take out an extended warranty package to address this.
4. **After sales** – Ensure good after sales service is offered and onsite repairs will be carried out if required. If the stair lift cannot be fixed on site, it may be costly and difficult to get it sent away for servicing.

Owning and running

Before you begin, ensure you have been shown how to operate the machine correctly either from a service engineer, or by carefully consulting any manual or instruction left with the lift. Be sure to get an engineer or qualified professional to service the stair lift every 6 or 12 months, depending on how much you use it. Your warranty should cover this and so most companies will offer complimentary servicing checks regardless, but make sure to keep on top of maintaining your stair lift.

Welcome to Help My Mobility buyers guide for walk in baths. We have written this guide to help you in purchasing the right bath for your needs. Please note that this guide is for information purposes only and you should seek medical and professional advice before buying.

What is a Walk in Bath?

A walk in bath is a bath with a door fitted to the side or end to enable the user to walk into the bath rather than having to step over the side of the bath. This system makes entering and exiting the bath much simpler and helps remove the risk of slipping or falling. Once in the bath the user can fill with water, then when finished empty the water, open the door and exit the bath.

Benefits and purpose of a Walk in Bath

The majority of bath users we speak to purchase a walk in bath for one or a combination of the following reasons:

1. **Safety** – For those who suffer with limited mobility stepping over the side of a traditional bath can often be difficult and dangerous. A walk in bath will remove this danger and make bathing time more relaxing.
2. **Independence** – Having the ability to bath without the need of assistance from a carer greatly improved the users' independence.

What should I look for when buying a Walk in Bath?

Like buying a normal bath, there are many factors which will affect your decision. These could be style, size, material and showering facilities, all of which have a bearing on your choice. A bath will need to be suited to your individual needs and existing bathroom décor, and so we recommend you shop thoroughly before making any final decision.

1. **Style** – Depending on your existing bathroom set up, colour scheme and size, it is almost certain that you will desire a bath which fits in with your existing suite, or one which will match a new suite you are intending to buy.
2. **Materials** – The need to find a good style makes choices such as the material your bath is made from (ranges from fibreglass to wood, plastic to ceramic) something to seriously consider when buying a Walk-in-Bath.
3. **Size** – Again depending on the style of your existing bathroom, the size of a new bath will need to be taken into consideration. The size of the bath is something which will also be determined by medical needs or the ability to stand after using the bath. Bear in mind size is largely customisable, and shapes can be altered to make the most of space in your bathroom.
4. **Shower** – Some users may need the use of standard showering equipment, either for themselves or for family members, and so fitting a wall hanging shower above the bath, or keeping an existing one in position above the bath, will give you options and more freedom.

Alternatively, you may wish to consider an easy-access shower. See our Buyer's Guide on Easy Access Showers, or visit the bathing section of our website www.help-my-mobility.org/walk-in-baths.htm

Features

Walk-in-Baths will include several unique features worth looking for, all of which will differ from bath to bath, and so make sure to find the right one to suit you:

1. **Fast fill and drain** – This feature does exactly what it says on the tin. Because you will already be in the bath before filling up, due to the nature of the walk-in, it is worth finding a bath which will fill and drain quickly, to stop you getting cold or bored.
2. **Door** – All walk in baths will have a door, but they will all vary in shapes, sizes and methods of opening. Find a door which is not too wide or too skinny to allow comfortable access, while wheelchair users can find helpful, specialist doors designed to make the transition from chair to bath and back again, with relatively little fuss. Also check whether you want an inward or outward opening door, as the latter may be an issue if your bathroom is small, and space is of the essence.
3. **Step** – The height of the step is the most important feature when choosing a walk in bathtub. If mobility is an issue then opt for a low step, otherwise make sure the step is as accessible as possible.

Buying Consideration

There are various ways to buy a walk in bath, the main ones being - local mobility shop, national dealer or online dealer. Like showers, baths can be sourced at regular bathroom showrooms, as well as specialist mobility centres. Here are the advantages of each type of retailer:

1. **Buying Locally** – Local dealers will usually offer a small selection of baths in store, with the option to bring in more products from suppliers to meet buyer's needs. They are often the most friendly and helpful, although sometimes response times for aftercare can be slow if the shop relies on outside engineers to service its customers. On the plus side they often have good knowledge and advice when buying an easy access bath, and offer a more personal touch. However finding local suppliers of walk in baths may not be easy as they are normally sold by larger national bathroom companies, although specialist shops will be scattered around the country.
2. **National Companies** – National dealers will naturally have much larger ranges to select from, and Help My Mobility work with national dealers who offer a home presentation service whereby they will visit you at home, undertake an assessment and then demonstrate suitable baths. Nationwide suppliers will have their own service engineers and so response times will be quick to any problems or issues. It is recommended to visit their showrooms before making up your mind.
3. **Online Dealer** – The best in terms of choice, style, customisation and price, online dealers can afford to be cheaper, with lower overhead costs and regional, if not national bases. It is an ideal place to begin a search for style and features from within your own home. However unless they have a physical shop, showroom or mobile sales team on hand to help, you will in most cases be unable to see the product before you buy. Although most baths will have a guarantee or similar.

4. Returns policy, it is essential to bear in mind whether this is plausible to take the risk of needing to send it back several times, and worse damaging fixtures and fittings in your bathroom which could be costly. A word on warning if you are buying online, although the prices may be tempting, always consider the after sales service and warranty offered for that cost as well. Some national companies will offer discount sales online but not in store, so make sure to take advantage of these where possible.

Whoever you decide to buy from you should consider:

1. **Project management** – Ensure the installation of the bath is overseen by professional servicemen from start to finish for peace of mind. If you are unsure about any aspect of the bath, how it works or how it will be installed, check before the work begins.
2. **Warranty** – Always ensure the bath has a comprehensive warranty including leakage from the door, although this is rare. Not only will it mean your bath is repaired free of charge, the company you bought it from will replace any parts or offer a replacement unit free of charge. Warranty normally will last for a minimum of ten years, however check this figure when purchasing.
3. **After sales service** – A good after sales service can be essential for peace of mind. Having a customer service advisor at the end of a phone, and a quick response time from engineers is worth seeking out, as should the bath leak or another issue arise, it will be dealt with swiftly and efficiently.

Paying for your Walk-in-Bath

Having decided on your bath, and where you are going to get it from, it is worth considering how you plan on paying for it. Most companies offer payment agreements, whereby you can pay a certain amount per week/month. These deals can be handy if you have been struggling to save enough money to buy one outright. They also allow you to perhaps spend more than you could afford, giving you extra time to get the money together. Perfect if your budget is small or doesn't stretch to cover all of your requirements. Just be careful to avoid high interest rates, and research the company you are buying from. Help My Mobility's partners all offer reasonable payment plans, and would not endorse any product or company if it is not to the benefit of you, the consumer.

After the Sale

Ensure you clean the unit regularly, and check for any cracks or breaks in both the tub, and the door, with particular attention on the sealant. It is advised to call the company or an engineer should this occur, before they worsen and cause a leak or worse. They will fix it for you without the need to replace any parts.

Welcome to Help My Mobility buyers guide for electric wheelchairs. We have written this guide to help you in purchasing the right wheelchair for your needs. Please note that this guide is for information purposes only and you should seek medical and professional advice before buying.

What is an Electric Wheelchair?

An electric wheelchair is a battery powered wheelchair usually controlled by the user via a joystick. There are various different types of powered wheelchairs available to suit most requirements.

Benefits and purpose of an Electric Wheelchair

The majority of wheelchair users we speak to purchase a wheelchair for one or a combination of the following reasons:

1. **Greater Independence** – Having an electric wheelchair can greatly improve the independence of the user, as there is no need to rely on the carer to operate the chair.
2. **Greater Manoeuvrability** – A wheelchair has the ability to turn in extremely small areas, almost turning within its own width. This makes them ideal for indoor use.
3. **Easy to Operate** – Unlike scooters which require two hands to control the scooter, wheelchairs can be operated by one hand with the use of a joystick. Making it much easier to control and operate if you have limited mobility.

What to consider before buying an electric wheelchair

There are different styles of wheelchair, each suited to specific needs. Things to consider before deciding on a chair include height, weight, care requirements, the environment you will be using the chair in, and your condition. The main aim is to find a wheelchair which is comfortable for you to spend long periods in, and allows you to move easiest around the house, or when out and about.

Before buying, consider whether your home is suitable for a power wheelchair. A small, compact or cluttered home may severely limit mobility on the chair. Also be sure to assess whether you will require the chair to be transported regularly. Most chairs WILL NOT fold or have any portable features, and so if this is the case stick to portable models.

Types of Electric Wheelchair

Electric Wheelchairs typically fit into four main categories; Indoor/Portable chairs, Indoor/Outdoor Mid Drive chairs, Indoor/Outdoor Rear Drive chairs, Outdoor chairs. Each has distinct features to differentiate them from one another, and your needs will determine which category to start looking for. Here is a list of features to help decide which type is right for you.

1. **Indoor/Portable** – These small, agile machines are perfect for tight spaces indoors. They are light, and often foldable, making them ideal for carrying in the back of a car. It is worth noting that they are designed primarily for indoor use on flat ground, and so are ideal for shopping, but not outdoor exploring due to their low ground clearance and light, less rugged frames/wheels.

2. **Indoor/Outdoor Mid Drive** – Larger than the portable versions, the indoor/outdoor chairs are suitable for a wide range of use. Their mid drive capabilities gives them a very tight turning circle, despite being larger, due to the positioning of the wheels. While they are larger than their portable counterparts, these chairs should navigate tight spaces in the home relatively easily.
3. **Indoor/Outdoor Rear Drive** – Driven by wheels at the rear of the chair, these are larger than the portable and mid drive, and as a result has a much wider turning circle. They can be difficult to navigate through tight spaces in the home. As more rugged models, rear drive chairs can utilise additional options such as a kerb climber, and some find it easier to control.
4. **Outdoor** – The largest, bulkiest and heaviest by far, outdoor chairs are built for exactly that. The outdoors. Suitable for rough terrain with their big, deep-tread wheels, consider an outdoor chair if its sole purpose will be for use outside.

Features

Before rushing in to buy, check what additional features can be offered with your electric wheelchair, including kerb climbing gear, adjustable foot rests, joystick options, and pushing handles for manual use by carers.

1. **Kerb Climbers** – Does exactly what the name suggests. These utilise extra wheels or feet at the front or rear of the chair, and using sensors will lift the chair safely and smoothly up onto a raised surface over a kerb. Handy if you use the chair independently, and avoiding kerbs is impossible.
2. **Adjustable Foot Rest** – Useful if mobility is restricted, being able to move hanging foot rests out of the way allows more space to move into and out of the chair efficiently.
3. **Joystick/Control options** – Choosing the right chair is important, but as is choosing a comfortable control method. Depending on individual needs and conditions, having the choice of where the joystick will sit is vital, particularly if the user cannot use their left or right arm, for example. Controls can be fully customised by manufacturers.

Buying Considerations

There are various methods to buy an electric wheelchair, the main ones being - local mobility shop, national dealer or online dealer. Each have their own pros and cons:

Buying Local – Local dealers will usually offer a small selection of products in store, with the option to bring in more from suppliers in order to meet the buyer's needs. They are often the most friendly and helpful, although sometimes response times for aftercare can be slow if the shop relies on outside engineers to service its customers. On the plus side they often have good knowledge and advice when buying an electric wheelchair, and offer a more personal touch. However finding local suppliers of wheelchairs may not be easy as they are specialist pieces of equipment.

National Companies – National dealers will naturally have much larger ranges to select from, and Help My Mobility work with national dealers who offer a home presentation service whereby they will visit you at home, undertake an assessment and then demonstrate a suitable wheelchair. Nationwide suppliers will have their own service engineers and so response times will be quick to fix any problems or issues. It is recommended to make a trip to their showrooms before making up your mind.

Online dealer – The best in terms of choice, style, customisation and price, online dealers can afford to be cheaper, with lower overhead costs and regional, if not national bases. It is an ideal place to begin a search for style and features from within your own home. However unless they have a physical shop, showroom or mobile sales team on hand to help, you will in most cases be unable to see the product before you buy. Although most wheelchairs will have a 28 day guarantee or similar returns policy, it is essential to bear in mind whether this is to send it back several times. A word on warning if you are buying online, although the prices may be tempting, always consider the after sales service and warranty offered for that cost as well. Some national companies will offer discount sales online but not in store, so make sure to take advantage of these where possible.

Buying Second Hand

Buying second hand is worth contemplating if you are purchasing a power chair on a budget. If money is tight, check with your GP or local health service as to whether there is funding available to fund some of or all your purchase. Relevant charities may also offer wheelchair subsidies, dependent on the severity of the case.

Second hand chairs, while not brand new, can be the best to buy if you find the right seller. Previous users of a chair can be the best people to ask about its strengths and weaknesses, its comfort and its practicality. On a negative note, beware fake or neglected wheelchairs, so always check the chair is in good condition, and try before you buy. Reconditioned chairs distributed by suppliers may offer a more secure investment than independent buying, and will usually come with a guarantee of some kind.

Delivery and setup – Ensure the wheelchair is setup by a professional when it is delivered, and that you receive a demonstration on how to operate it before they leave. If you are unhappy with anything at this point, let the engineer or company know to make sure it is sorted quickly.

Warranty – Always ensure the wheelchair has a comprehensive warranty rather than a “return to manufacturer” warranty. With the latter, you will have to send the product back to the company for any repairs, sometimes in the original packaging. Comprehensive warranty will usually mean the service engineer will fix it at your home or where it has broken down, and failure to repair will normally give you either a new or courtesy chair, to keep until yours is fixed.

After sales service – A good after sales service can be essential for peace of mind. Having someone on the end of a phone, or to come out quickly if there is a problem, is essential when the chair is your main means of mobility. Be sure to get your chair serviced regularly, and most companies will include this in your purchase.

For free independent information on Mobility Products,
visit our website www.help-my-mobility.org