

Motorised Mobility Devices  
Fact Sheet 4

## Safe use of your motorised mobility device

Road Safety Victoria (Department of Transport) has produced a series of fact sheets to support safe use of motorised scooters and powered wheelchairs in our community. This fact sheet contains important information about how to use your device so that you protect your own safety and the safety of others.

In this resource, the term 'motorised mobility device' includes both mobility scooters and powered wheelchairs, unless they are mentioned separately.



### What are the safety risks?

It is estimated that more than 1,000 people are admitted to hospital in Australia each year as a result of injuries associated with mobility scooters (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019).<sup>1</sup>

Almost all injuries are to scooter users themselves and these result from: the scooter tipping over; a collision with a stationary object; the user tripping or falling from the scooter or a collision with a moving object.

Pedestrians and other road users such as cyclists can also be injured. A collision with a heavy moving device such as a mobility scooter can cause serious injury and falls, even at relatively low speeds.

**One of the most important things you need to do to protect your safety and that of others is to learn how to use your device properly.**

This means getting thorough hands-on training from an occupational therapist who will work with your supplier to help you understand how to use your device in and around your local environment.

Training will cover:

- basic operations such as turning and reversing
- how to manage the device in different circumstances and on different terrains
- how to crossroads safely including how to negotiate kerbs
- how to avoid tipping over while using your device
- how to charge and store your device, and much more.

<sup>1</sup> AIHW, McKenna K, Tovel A and Pointer S (2019). *Mobility scooter-related injuries and deaths*. Injury research and statistics series no. 121. Canberra, AIHW



## The safety of others

You are responsible for using your mobility device safely around others:

- Travel at walking pace when around other pedestrians and slow to match their speed. Be particularly careful in areas such as train platforms and shopping centres.
- Observe ahead and around you for children, cyclists, potholes/uneven footpath, and people who are distracted while using their mobile phones. Check your mirror frequently.
- These devices are intended to carry one person only – you should not allow other people to travel on the device with you.
- In shopping areas, keep closer to the kerb and away from shop doorways to avoid running into people coming out of shops.
- Be careful when changing direction. Turn your head to look around and behind (don't just rely on your mirror).
- Travel in single file - don't travel next to another motorised mobility device.
- Don't use your mobile phone while operating your device.
- Avoid other distractions such as using headphones to listen to the radio/music.
- It is a good idea to have public liability insurance in case you are involved in an incident that results in property damage or injury to someone else. See Useful Contacts on the last page.

## Your safety – general tips

You can improve your safety by following these tips:

- You should travel on the footpath whenever possible. If there are no footpaths (such as in country areas), and you have no alternative but to travel on a road, plan to use quieter roads. It is important to face oncoming traffic with your lights on and stay as close to the kerb as possible. Return to the nature strip or footpath as soon as possible.
- A visibility flag is also helpful as the bright colour and movement will help draw people's attention to you. The flag should be positioned on a pole at the back of the device.
- Avoid hills if possible. Going uphill uses more battery power and downhill puts more strain on your device. It is also more difficult to keep your balance. If hills are unavoidable, travel slowly. Try to avoid turning or stopping on a slope as there is an increased risk of tipping over.
- Watch out for cars reversing out of driveways or shopping centre car parks.
- Avoid being close to the back of parked or reversing cars. The driver may not be able to see you. Try to cross in front of parked cars if you need to.
- Slow down to make a turn. Faster speeds increase the risk of tipping over.
- To be more visible, use your lights during the day and avoid travelling at night or in dim light.
- Under the Road Rules, **your device cannot travel faster than 10km per hour**. However, it is your responsibility to travel at a speed that is appropriate for the conditions, including at a similar pace to other pedestrians (usually about 5km/hour). It is also important to travel at a speed where you can stop quickly or turn without the risk of tipping over in case of an unexpected event.
- If you are carrying bags, shopping or walking aids, be careful about the extra weight and the effect it may have on the balance of your device. Ensure that bags do not get in the way of controls, restrict your view or obscure your lights. Ensure they do not affect other pedestrians.

## Your safety – crossing the road

Users of motorised mobility devices are very vulnerable around larger fast-moving traffic. It is very important to be looking around you and fully concentrating when you cross the road.

- Cross the road in safe locations. Avoid crossing on bends or hills, where you don't have a clear view of oncoming traffic. Pedestrian crossings and traffic lights are the best places to cross the road.
- At pedestrian lights, you can cross the road when the green walking man appears. You must not commence crossing the road when the walking man is red or is flashing red. If it starts flashing when you are part way you must continue to cross - don't stop.
- Always cross the road by the shortest route. Before you cross always check that there is an accessible crossing point on the other side (e.g. driveway or ramp).
- To minimise the risk of tipping over, approach driveways, crossover ramps or kerbs head-on rather than at an angle.
- Before commencing to cross, check that approaching cars are slowing down or stopped. Make eye contact with the driver to make sure they have seen you.
- If you must cross at an intersection with no lights or signs, check carefully for any approaching or turning cars. You must not start to cross a road in front of an approaching car.
- When crossing at a roundabout, all pedestrians and motorised mobility device users must give way to all traffic in or entering the roundabout. The driver does not have to give way to you and will be busy checking for other vehicles so might not see you.
- If crossing a bicycle path, you must give way to cyclists.
- To cross railway or tram tracks, always cross at a right angle (90 degrees) and try to cross at pedestrian cross overs to avoid getting the wheels caught in the tracks.

## Stopping and parking (for scooter users)

- Before getting off your device, make sure it is switched off and remove the key. That way the motor will not engage, and the device will not move while you get on/off. Similarly, make sure you are comfortably seated before you turn on the device to avoid accidentally knocking the controls.
- Try not to park on slopes. This places extra strain on the mobility scooter motor when you start up again. It is also more difficult to get on and off if you are not on flat ground and you might lose your balance and fall.
- Consider others when parking to make sure your device is not obstructing doorways, thoroughfares or driveways. When parking on the footpath, make sure that there is room for others including people with prams and other devices to use the footpath.
- You cannot use vehicle car parks to park your motorised mobility device, even if the parks are designated as parking spaces for people with disabilities.

## Road rules for pedestrians on motorised mobility devices

Motorised mobility devices are designed to be used on footpaths. The road rules that apply to users of motorised mobility devices are the same road rules that apply to pedestrians. It is important that you know the rules and obey them. Although a driver licence is not required to use a motorised mobility device and devices do not need to be registered, users must still have the capacity to take responsibility for using them safely. This includes knowing and applying road rules.



# Things to check before each trip

## Batteries

- Are the batteries fully charged? Never fully drain the batteries. Be aware of how long you can travel on fully charged batteries.

*Note that the device will not start if it is connected to the power supply.*

- Is there a RECHARGE station available on your trip?  
(See Useful Contacts on page 5)

## Tyres

- Are the tyres inflated to the correct pressure? Under-inflated tyres may cause stability problems and use more battery power as resistance increases.
- If you tend to get flat/damaged tyres, it is recommended you carry spare inner tubes.

## Your judgment

- Are you fit to operate the device?
- Have you recently been unwell or taken medicines, alcohol or other drugs that may affect your judgment, vision or movement?
- Have the dosages of your medicines been changed recently?
- If your health has changed, you should check with your doctor before you use your device.

## Seat

- Is the seat adjusted to the correct position?
- Some seats turn sideways to make it easier to get on/off. If your seat does this, make sure it is facing forwards and is locked in position before you move.

## Weather

- Is it sunny? Do you need a hat and sunscreen?
- Is it wet? Do you need a raincoat? If it's wet, make sure that the controls are protected from the weather.
- Be very careful that clothes, umbrellas or canopies do not make it hard for you to watch and listen for traffic and other road users sharing the footpath.

## Clothing

- Are you dressed appropriately for the weather?
- Are you wearing light-coloured clothing so you can be seen more easily?
- Are you wearing suitable shoes to ensure you are steady when getting on and off the device?

## Personal items

- Do you have your sunglasses and prescription glasses for distance if you need them?
- Do you know where you might access disability friendly toilets?

## Mobile phone

- Do you have a charged mobile phone? This makes it easy to contact someone if you have a problem. **Do not use the phone when moving on the device.**

## Identification

- Do you have an easily accessible ICE (In Case of Emergency) phone contact? This enables others to contact this person if something happens to you.
- Do you have a waterproof label on the device with your first name and mobile phone number? This enables others to contact you in the event of loss or if your device is obstructing entrances.

## Time of Day

- Will it be very busy – should you plan the trip at a different time of day?
- Will it get dark while you are out? Avoid travelling at dusk or at night.



This sign means that no pedestrians are allowed, for example at an entry to a carpark or on carpark ramps. This means you can't travel past this sign when walking or using a motorised mobility device.

# Useful Contacts

## Road Safety Victoria (Department of Transport) and VicRoads

[vicroads.vic.gov.au](http://vicroads.vic.gov.au)

VicRoads provides resources (including this fact sheet) for motorised mobility device users so that they are aware of the pedestrian road rules and use devices responsibly and safely.

## Local support & facilities

### Municipal Councils

Municipal Council websites can provide useful information about accessibility, including accessible transport stops, the location of charging stations and accessible community facilities.

### Council of the Ageing (Victoria)

[cotavic.org.au](http://cotavic.org.au)

Council of the Ageing (COTA) represents the interests and rights of people aged 50+ in Victoria. They offer programs, events and information addressing a wide range of issues relevant to older Victorians.

## Health advice

### Occupational Therapy Australia

[otaus.com.au](http://otaus.com.au)

OT Australia is the peak professional body representing occupational therapists. The website provides useful information to find an occupational therapist who specialises in motorised mobility device assessment and training.

### Local health services

Local health services may offer occupational therapy out-patient services to support mobility assessment and training. Ask to speak to someone in the occupational therapy department.

## Suppliers

### Assistive Technology Suppliers Australia

[atsa.org.au](http://atsa.org.au)

Assistive Technology Suppliers Australia is the industry body representing suppliers of mobility aids. They can help you find a supplier and have information resources and events for consumers.

## Insurance, breakdown assistance & charging

### Blue Badge Insurance Australia

[bluebadgeinsurance.com.au](http://bluebadgeinsurance.com.au)

Blue Badge specialises in comprehensive insurance for people with reduced mobility and disabilities. Products include comprehensive insurance for scooters and wheelchairs, as well as vehicle insurance for vehicles modified to accommodate people with disabilities as either drivers or passengers.

### RACV

[racv.com.au](http://racv.com.au)

RACV Emergency Wheelchair and Scooter Assistance is a breakdown service for users. Members receive up to 8 call outs per year to assist with flat tyres or batteries or minor mechanical repairs. A wheelchair accessible taxi will be arranged if required. Users must carry spare tyre tubes for tyres to be repaired.

### Recharge Scheme

[rechargescheme.org.au](http://rechargescheme.org.au)

With the support of participating businesses and organisations, the Recharge Scheme allows motorised mobility device users to safely recharge their devices at no cost. Recharge locations can be found on the website. You can also contact your local council and ask for the MetroAccess Officer (metropolitan areas) or RuralAccess Officer (rural areas).

The provision of this guide to consumers/ carers is not sufficient, nor does it constitute or replace, adequate user assessment and training as would be provided by an AHPRA registered health professional.