



SELECTING A WHEELCHAIR BACK

A back support serves multiple functions when it comes to wheelchair positioning. The most obvious, of course, is for support, but this is only one of several functions. A back system can also serve as an anchor for hardware and secondary supports, provide tissue integrity management, redistribute pressure from the buttocks, and enhance upper body positioning and function, to name a few benefits.

A back support should be selected based on the needs of the client. These needs are generally identified during a needs assessment and a mat evaluation done by the clinician. This gives the user and prescribing therapist a good idea of the features that will be necessary and narrow down the selection options.

Some things to think about when selecting a back system:

- Is the system one-hand operable? Does it need to be?
- How heavy is the system for those who remove the system often or self-propel?
- Is hardware, such as head rests and laterals, easily mountable?
- Is the hardware easy to manipulate for those with impaired fine motor skills?
- Does the system offer tissue integrity management?
- Does the system conform to bony prominences and spinal curvatures without irritating?
- Can the back system be purchased with the rest of the seating system to ensure compatibility?
- Can the attaching hardware "grow" with a child to allow for different chair widths and seating depths?
- Is a solid back needed to block the pelvis for additional support?
- What kind of warranty is offered?