



# **Tips to Prevent Shoulder Pain and Shoulder Injury**

**For Adult Manual Wheelchair Users**

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## Tips for decreasing your risk of shoulder pain:

- **Transfers**

- Make transfer surfaces as close to the same height as possible and as close together as possible.
- Try to keep both hands on the transfer surfaces throughout the transfer.
- Progress height of surfaces slowly when transferring from floor to chair or from a low-high height.
- Avoid extreme shoulder motions during all activities.
- If possible, lead with the arm/shoulder that has the most pain first.
- Avoid pushing up on wheelchair to perform pressure relief and other activities. Use the forward lean technique and sideways lean technique to perform tasks.
- Avoid pulling on overhead handles.
- Consult your physical therapist or wheelchair company about making adjustments to your wheelchair (push rim type, tire type, tire pressure etc.).



- **Wheelchair Propelling**

- Try to make wheelchair strokes long and smooth. Try to perform as little number of strokes as possible to conserve energy and improve endurance.
- Gently grasp the push rim at the beginning of the stroke.
- Avoid rapid and forceful movements at the beginning of the stroke and at the end of the stroke. Your hand should slowly glide down after finishing the stroke and then return to the wheel in a natural, circular motion.
- Use tires to push off instead of the push rim if more shock absorption is needed.
- Ask your wheelchair company or physical therapist about wheelchair modifications for improved propelling or more flexible push rims (width of wheelchair, wheel axle set up, seat angle, etc.).
- Avoid rough/uneven ground and steep inclines whenever possible to avoid strain and high forces through the shoulder joint.
- Stop to rest if your arms become tired while pushing because of a long distance or because of a difficult environment to push through.
- If you begin to feel tired during a steep incline, stop and turn the wheelchair sideways to rest.
- Consult your physical therapist about changing your daily exercise routine if you are too tired or too sore to propel your wheelchair after your exercise session.