



Wheelchair Evaluation

Your doctor or other health care professional has recommended that a manual wheelchair, power wheelchair, or scooter would be helpful for mobility. How do you decide which one would be best for you? A qualified physical therapist (PT) or occupational therapist (OT) can help evaluate what type of equipment would be most appropriate.

Why is a wheelchair evaluation necessary?

By participating in a wheelchair evaluation, we will be able to identify which type of mobility device would best suit your function and needs. It will provide valuable information about your functional abilities, your environment (home, work, school), and any other special needs.

Insurance providers (both private and governmental) have very specific requirements that must be fulfilled in order for them to approve the purchase of any mobility device/wheelchair. This will include a detailed evaluation and/or a letter of medical necessity. Your therapist will be able to identify these requirements and meet those obligations.

What can I expect during the wheelchair evaluation?

The evaluation will take approximately 2 hours. The physical or occupational therapist will be present at the time of the evaluation, along with a representative from a wheelchair company to assist in identifying the most appropriate equipment for you.

The therapist will evaluate:

- Your physical abilities
- The accessibility of your environment
- Your functional limitations
- Your ability to perform mobility related activities of daily living (MRADLs) such as bathing, dressing, grooming, toileting, homemangement, transfers, and ambulation.
- The type of transportation you use
- How the wheelchair will increase your independence
- Your ability to use the mobility device safely, including specific seating and positioning issues

Once your mobility needs have been identified, the therapist will provide you an opportunity to try similar equipment and provide training in the use of the equipment, whether it is a wheelchair or scooter.

Why should I have an appointment with an occupational or physical therapist?

Physical and occupational therapists have a knowledge of anatomy, disease progression, and wheelchairs, and can advocate for the appropriate equipment for you. It is their job to:

- Identify the mobility device that best meets your needs and functional limitations (manual

wheelchair, power wheelchair, or scooter)

- Identify the seating and positioning products that will work best for your body and functional needs
- Identify any special needs that require custom fitting, adaptive seating functions (tilt/recline), or specific modifications to meet your needs.

The therapist will assist in making these decisions and provide the justifications for medical necessity to the insurance company.

Qualities to look for in a wheelchair supplier

The physical or occupational therapist at the Mellen Center will have a qualified wheelchair supplier present at the time of the evaluation to assist with decision making on the most appropriate equipment for your needs.

If you live out of state, it is in your best interest to obtain your wheelchair locally for servicing and repairs. You will want to make sure that the company you contact has the following qualifications:

- The company is accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO).
- The company representatives are members of the National Registry of Rehabilitation Technology Suppliers (NRRTS).
- The company representatives are accredited by the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA).
- The therapist is familiar with neurological disorders, particularly MS/ALS progression.
- The therapist has experience with performing wheelchair evaluations and works with a qualified wheelchair company.

Steps for getting a wheelchair

- You must have a specific order for a wheelchair evaluation by your Mellen Center doctor.
- Call the Mellen Center appointment line at 216.444.8600 to make an appointment with the PT/OT for a wheelchair evaluation.
- Come to your appointment with :
 - Insurance cards
 - Current wheelchair, if you have one
 - Caregivers or family members if appropriate
- The therapist will evaluate and document the medical need for the equipment.
- The doctor reviews and signs the paperwork if in agreement.
- The vendor will submit the paperwork to the insurance company for approval.
- Once approved, the vendor will order the equipment.
- The vendor will then schedule a date for delivery to your home.

In many cases, the wheelchair vendor will need to perform a home evaluation in order to assess accessibility and to document that the equipment ordered/recommended will be able to be used in your home.