

The selection of power scooter models are just as diverse as the available models of cars and trucks on the market. Although scooter features vary from manufacturer to manufacturer, some common features do exist that will help you make the best choice.

Selecting the best power scooter

By Linda Norton, BSc OT, OT Reg (Ont)

A scooter is a three or four-wheeled mobility aid with a seat and tiller control. You can control the forward/reverse drive by pushing a lever on the tiller, regulate the speed by turning the handle, and twist the tiller to steer the scooter. The tiller also has a place for a security key, so you can leave the scooter unattended and not worry about someone else driving it.

Generally, scooters are best used outside as they tend to need a fair amount of space for turning and manoeuvring. Some smaller scooters are designed more for indoor use, but they may not be as durable for outdoor mobility.

A wealth of choice

Number of wheels: Scooters with three wheels tend to manoeuvre better in smaller spaces; however, you may be at more risk of tipping the scooter during tight fast turns than with a four-wheeled scooter.

Seating: Some scooters have a moulded plastic seat, and others are upholstered and have more padding. Choose the type that is most comfortable for you.

Portability: Most scooters can be broken down into component parts, so they can be easily loaded into a car. Before purchase, make sure that you are able to dismantle the scooter and lift each piece. Now, imagine doing this in the rain or snow.



Photo: Pride Mobility Products

Batteries: With normal use and regular charging, batteries can last from one to two years. You power up the batteries by plugging your device into an external charger that plugs into an outlet. This means you would power up your mobility device in the same location each time.

The right device

When shopping for a scooter, consider your wants and needs. Ask yourself where you want to go, how much help you will need (if any), and what kind of device you think is best.

Finally, if you want an objective opinion, consult with a therapist who will help you investigate your options. Being an informed consumer will help you purchase the device that best meets your needs. ●

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Safety first

Here are a few tips to ensure your scooter lasts as long as you need it to:

- Rain and electric scooters don't mix! Invest in a cover for your mobility scooter, even if you're storing it in the garage or cellar.
 - Most scooters have anti-tip devices for safety. Never remove these anti-tip devices.
 - Get a master key so no one has access to your scooter.
 - Use reflectors for night driving.
 - Don't load or unload mobility scooters into a vehicle without help.
- Source: wheelchairs.lifetips.com



Five big lessons I've learned

By Bart J. Mindszenty, APR, Fellow CPRS

I spent some quiet time with my mother at her nursing home late yesterday. It was shortly after dinner. Some of her fellow residents were watching television. Others were already being readied for bed.

My mother and I sat in the hallway by the door to her shared room; she, in her wheelchair, and me, in a chair facing her.

My mother doesn't talk too much these days. Rather, there is a more vacant look, a handful of occasional words trying to express a thought either in English or Hungarian.

A time to reflect

So I have time to reflect, which is what I did last night—reflect on what I've learned from the process of caring for my father until he died two-and-a-half years ago, and my mother. I believe I've learned five big lessons, and perhaps you will relate to them.

Parents think we, their children, stay children no matter what our age. The fact is that we are their children, and in their paradigm, we might be older, taller, balder, or whatever, but we are still their children. There is a sense of entitlement that comes with the relationship. They may back



off, and may even be respectful of our lives and families, but they will seldom if ever refrain from trying to influence us. So I've learned to just take it in stride and listen with patience as from time to time my mother tells me firmly what I'm doing wrong. Now, I thank her and move on. It is the path of least resistance and makes my mother feel better.

2 Parents usually choose to remember being right and doing the right thing. "I told you so" is a key

phrase among many of our parents. It's a catch-all, handy rejoinder when we relate any issue or incident touching our lives that may be a tad contentious. That phrase is used to remind us that they at some point made a point that, had we listened and acted on it, would have prevented something negative from happening. At this stage in their lives many of them want to remember being right. It's important to their sense of achievement, self-respect and their deep desire to have been good parents.

3 Parents need to feel they're independent and can retain their dignity. My mother, realizing she's knowing less and retreating into the recesses of her Alzheimer disease, still struggles to express her independence. I am often awed by her periodic expressions of what she likes and doesn't like. She wants to be dressed nicely, and look good; she wants her hair done. She also wants to express her feelings and views, but that is becoming more difficult as her vocabulary constricts. I have learned to support that by filling in the gaps, finishing the thoughts, or whatever to make her feel she is a very real, important person, which she is, regardless of what she's able to do or not do.

4 Parents, as they age, see the world as they wish. My father, as he was nearing the end of his life while his mind was still crisp and astute, began expressing a perception of the world that perhaps worked half a century ago but wasn't relevant at the moment. He was living in a world that was, not that is. I needed to understand, respect and work with that reality. My mother, meanwhile, is seeing her world through her own rose-coloured

glasses. She sometimes sees snow in the summer. She hears noises only she can hear. She remembers meeting someone who died years ago and forgets who visited just hours ago. Her world is filled with grey zones and whiteouts, and often with images of once long ago. And I need to share those experiences and hold her hand and make her feel comfortable and safe.

Just look deeply into your aging parents' eyes and you'll see affection, concern, passion, and love. And there is nothing more we can ever ask for, or get.

5 Parents really do love us! No matter what we think, remember or have to experience, the reality is that our parents actually and really do love us for what we are: their children. They may do things that drive us batty, but if we look at the scorecard of a lifetime, they will have wanted to do their best, even if they may not have achieved it all. Just look deeply into your aging parents' eyes and you'll see affection, concern, passion, and love. And there is nothing more we can ever ask for, or get. They may have done all sorts of things that anger us or please us. But our parents will have demonstrated a love for us that is impossible to ignore.

A juggling act

We all have this tough juggling act to do. It's to balance our daily lives with the needs and challenges of our aging parents, wherever they are and whatever condition they're in. We'd be wise to try and understand and respect their needs, and to do what we can to fulfill their late-in-life perceptions and dreams.

What we should remember is that our job is to simply bring them as much comfort and support as we can. To make their remaining lives as meaningful and rich as possible. This way they, and we, will hopefully feel a sense of accomplishment of a life well lived. ●

Bart J. Mindszenty, APR, Fellow CPRS, is a regular contributor to Solutions magazine and co-author of Parenting Your Parents, now in its second edition.

"The secret to longevity is to keep breathing."

Sophie Tucker