

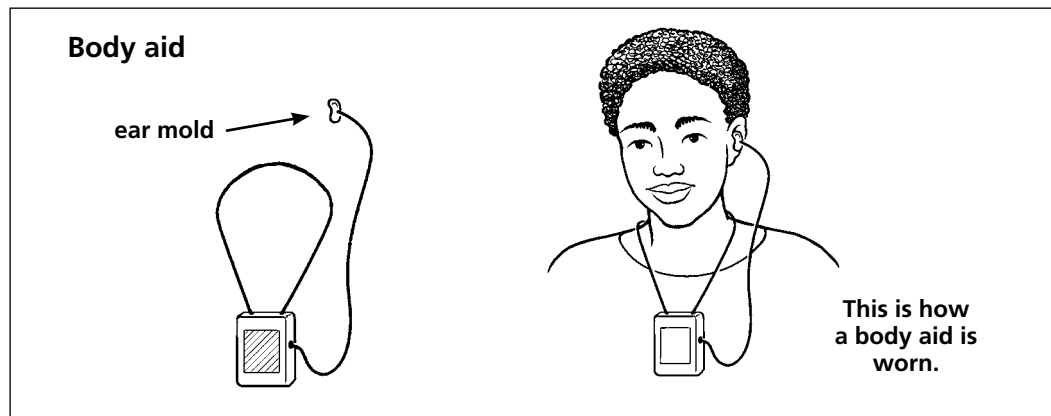
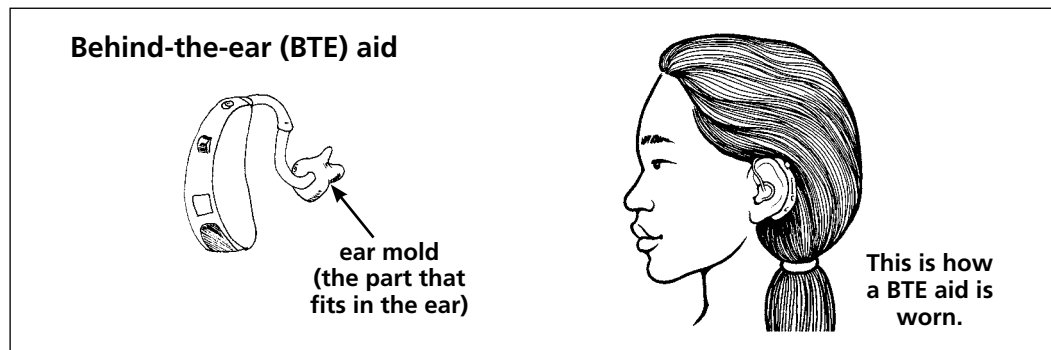
Take care of your equipment

This chapter has information about how women with certain disabilities can take care of their equipment so it will work well and last as long as possible.

Hearing aids

Hearing aids are expensive to begin with, but buying the aid is not the only cost. The ear mold **must** fit well, otherwise the hearing aid will not work correctly. If your ear mold starts to crack or get smaller (shrink), it will need to be replaced. Ear molds do not usually last more than 2 years. Also, all hearing aids need batteries to make them work.

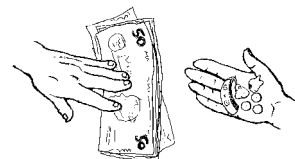
The 2 most common hearing aids are the:



These 2 hearing aids may need new batteries every week or every 2 or 3 months. How often you need new batteries depends on how many hours each day you wear your hearing aid, the type of hearing aid you have, and the kind of batteries you use.

An organization in Botswana, southern Africa, has found a way to make a hearing aid with batteries that can be used over and over (rechargeable). See page 377 for more information.

Some countries provide hearing aid batteries and ear molds free. Contact the Ministry of Health in your country to see if they are available.



Getting new ear molds and batteries can be very costly.



Hearing aids and batteries should be available to everyone who can benefit from them, not just to people who can afford them!

HOW TO TAKE CARE OF A HEARING AID

No matter what type of hearing aid you have, it will last longer and give better sound if it is given regular care. Here are some tips for taking care of a hearing aid:

- When you are not using it, keep your hearing aid far away from electrical equipment, such as refrigerators and televisions.
- Do not let it get very hot or very cold.
- Keep it dry—sweat or water will damage it. During the day, remove it from time to time and wipe off any sweat or moisture. Remove the hearing aid before bathing, swimming, or when out in the rain. At night, put the hearing aid in a container with silica gel (a material that absorbs moisture). Do not use perfumes or any sort of spray on the hearing aid.

Cleaning

- Use a soft dry cloth to clean it. Never use any cleaning fluid.

Ear mold

- Check for wax in the ear mold regularly.
- Clean the ear mold with warm water, and make sure it is dry before using it again.

Battery

- To make the battery last longer, turn off the hearing aid when it is not being used.
- Keep the battery clean, and remove it when the hearing aid is not being used for a length of time—for example, while sleeping at night.
- Change the battery regularly. To check if it is time to change the battery, turn the sound to the highest setting. If it makes a whistling noise, the battery is okay. If not, it is time to get a new battery. Ask someone to help you if necessary. If the battery loses power faster than usual, it may be a sign of a problem with the hearing aid.
- Store batteries in a cool, dry place. Bring a battery that has been kept in the refrigerator to room temperature before using.
- Try to have the hearing aid checked at a hearing aid clinic or store from time to time.

Hearing aids may need repair. Usually hearing aid repair can be done only in big cities. But deaf organizations have started training deaf people to take ear impressions, to make ear molds, and to repair hearing aids.

Using a stick to get around

If you are blind or have difficulty seeing, using a stick to get around can give you confidence, especially for walking in places you are not familiar with. The longer the stick, the faster you will be able to walk, because the stick will help you feel the area ahead of your steps.

The stick should be made from wood that is strong, but not too heavy or thick, so it is easy to carry all day. The top of the stick, where you hold it, should be thicker and can be curved or straight. You can also attach a cord to the handle that will fit loosely around your wrist. This will help prevent the stick from getting dropped or lost.

Each day, before leaving home, check your stick for any breaks or cracks by feeling along the whole length. Ask someone to help if necessary.



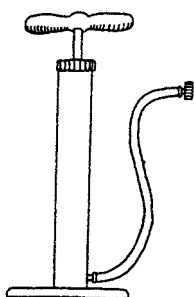
The best length for a stick is one that reaches from the ground to halfway between your waist and shoulders.

Taking care of your wheelchair

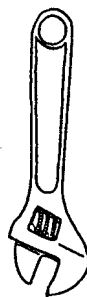
Your wheelchair will last longer and give you a smoother ride if you take good care of it. To do this yourself, you will need some basic tools (see the box below). These pages (366 to 368) are a general guide to help you care for your wheelchair. How much maintenance your chair will need can depend on how rough or smooth the roads or pathways are where you live and ride your chair.



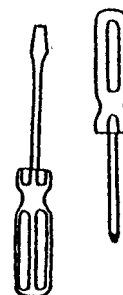
Tools for taking care of a wheelchair



bicycle pump

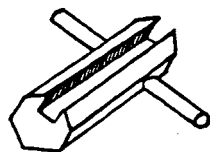


adjustable
wrench

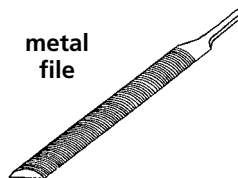


screwdriver

spoke
wrench



metal
file



It also helps to have some:

- medium weight machine oil
- soft wax—the kind used to shine a car, or wax made from the jojoba plant or shea tree, or lanolin made from sheep's wool, or cocoa butter made from roasted cocoa beans. Candle wax will not work because it is too brittle.

DAILY

- Clean any dirt off the wheelchair frame with a damp cloth.
- Try to keep water and dirt from getting into the bearings in the front and rear wheels (do not store your wheelchair where it will get wet).
- Check the tires to make sure they are still hard. Use the bicycle pump to add air if necessary. The tires should be very hard when you press on them.



Be kind to your wheelchair,
and it will be kind to you.

EVERY WEEK

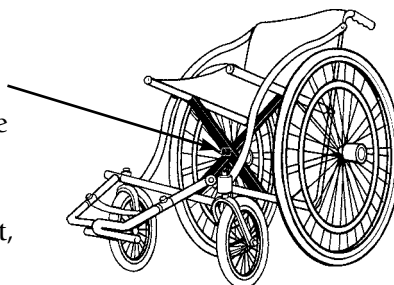
- Check the tires for weak or worn tread and punctures. If there is a nail or tack stuck in your tire, do not pull it out until you are ready to get the tube fixed. Change the tire if necessary. If your wheelchair uses bicycle tires, they can be repaired or replaced in a bicycle shop. It is not very difficult to patch a puncture in the tube inside the tire. Ask someone in a bicycle shop to show you.
- Check the rear wheels to see if they spin freely. If they wobble or make an unusual noise, the ball bearings may be worn and might need to be replaced. Also, tighten any parts that feel loose (you may need to visit a mechanic to borrow bigger wrenches). After you tighten the nuts, you may have to loosen them a little bit so that the wheels can spin freely.
- If the front forks do not turn from side to side easily, make sure they are not bumping into the footrests. If the whole fork wiggles a lot, tighten the top nut down tight, and then loosen it just enough so that it can turn easily.
- If the front wheels do not spin freely, they may need new bearings. It is best to have them checked in a wheelchair shop.
- Clean any dirt or hair out of all 4 wheel axle housings using a damp cloth with a few drops of oil on it.
- Wiggle the spokes in the large back wheels. Use the spoke wrench to tighten any that are loose. Replace any broken ones.

MONTHLY

- Wax the wheelchair frame to make it easier to clean, open, and close.
- Ball bearings in the center of the wheels may be factory sealed. If they are not, take them out, clean them with solvent, dry them, and put them back in with new grease. If water gets into the bearings, it can cause rust, and the wheelchair will not roll smoothly.
- Check arm rests, leg rests, and hand rims for rough spots or sharp edges. File them smooth.
- Check the screws and bolts on your chair and tighten any loose ones. Look for screws on the seat back and bolts on the seat, hand rim, x-brace, footrests, front axles, rear axles, brakes, front caster (front small wheel), and pivot (turning point). The front caster pivot bolt should be tight but not too tight, or the chair will be hard to steer.
- Check the wheelchair frame for cracks or dents. A crack may cause the frame to break. Some cracks can be welded together.

EVERY 4 TO 6 MONTHS

- Oil the center and bottom of the x-brace with medium-weight machine oil. Oil the other pivot points on the chair.
- Check the seat fabric and replace it if it is torn or sags too far. This is very important, because sagging or torn seats can lead to pressure sores.
- If you are using a foam cushion, check to make sure it is still springy. A foam cushion that has lost its bounce can also lead to pressure sores.



IMPORTANT The front tires, whether they are solid rubber or filled with air, may need to be replaced in a wheelchair shop.

If your wheelchair breaks, you may need to have it repaired in a wheelchair shop. If there is no wheelchair shop in your area, a bicycle repair shop or metalwork shop may be able to help.