

Selecting Medical Equipment & Choosing a Supplier

To help you manage, you may need to use some equipment such as a walker, wheelchair, bath bench, etc. While you are in the hospital, your occupational therapist and/or physiotherapist will determine if you need any equipment and he/she will talk with you about any questions you may have.

It is necessary to arrange to have the equipment as soon as you can – planning for equipment needs should happen while you are still in the hospital. By taking care of these details right away, you are making sure that you will best meet your needs.

Choosing a supplier:

Equipment comes from a “supplier” and may be rented or purchased. Every supplier is different and provides different services. For example, some suppliers will provide home delivery, set-up, and follow-up services while others do not. As a consumer, you should feel that the supplier will provide good service while you arrange for the equipment and afterwards as well. It is wise to know about the “track record” of the supplier if possible. There are many suppliers to choose from. While the final decision of who to work with is yours, your therapist can help you navigate the system.

In addition to talking with your therapists, you can search for a supplier by going to the Home Medical Equipment Dealers Association (HMEDA) website. The HMEDA represents Suppliers and Manufacturers involved in providing home medical equipment to people living in BC. Visit: hmeda.com and click on: ‘Dealer Locator’ at the top of the page.

When renting or buying equipment, consider:

- Price (rental or purchase)
- Warranty
- Appearance
- Reliability – how well it does what it was designed to do...
- Functionality – how well it works for your particular need...
- Durability – how long it will last considering how much you will use it...



When possible, select a supplier in your home community that provides home delivery, set-up and follow-up services – this is a great convenience that you will probably appreciate. Also, be aware that suppliers want to follow-up with their own products and clients – obtaining follow-up services from a supplier that is different from the one you originally chose might be difficult.

If you need to buy equipment for long-term use, it is important to keep in mind that your abilities may change over time and your equipment may need to be adjusted or changed to continue to meet your needs. A community-based occupational therapist or physiotherapist, or the equipment supplier may provide follow-up assessments depending on the situation. It is ***strongly recommended*** that any significant change to your equipment or purchase of new equipment be done with the help of a qualified rehabilitation therapist or supplier. It is your responsibility to find out if the person you are working with is properly qualified to make decisions about your equipment needs.

A qualified person should:

- ✓ Have formal training in equipment selection and prescription.
- ✓ Be able to show that he/she has “up-to-date” skills through additional courses and upgrading of knowledge.
- ✓ Have some type of formal certification/membership in a legitimate organization, for example: the College of Occupational Therapists or Physical Therapists of BC, or Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA).

When talking to suppliers, consider asking them the following questions:

- ✓ What experience do you have working with people with my condition?
- ✓ What specific training and qualifications do you have in providing adaptive equipment?
- ✓ Do you have a variety of equipment so that I can trial different styles, and will I be able to keep the equipment for a short period so I can get a good idea of what will work best for my needs?
- ✓ Once I choose a piece of equipment, how long will delivery take?
- ✓ If equipment is not available right away, will you provide me with a loan of equipment until my new equipment arrives?
- ✓ What kind of follow-up services do you provide, and are there any charges?
- ✓ Do I need to bring my equipment in for servicing or can you pick it up from my home - and can I get a “loaner”?
- ✓ What is your policy for maintenance and replacement of equipment?
- ✓ What are the payment options available?
- ✓ Do you have a “rent-to-own” program?
- ✓ Do you have a “buy-back” or recycling program should I no longer require the equipment I purchase?

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