

The 7 leg rest options for wheelchair users

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There are many things to think about when choosing your electric wheelchair. One of the more significant factors for users is the style and type of leg rest they can choose from, as this feature is essential for ensuring that neither comfort or manoeuvrability are compromised in any way.

The most important choice you make will be between opting for a single centre-mounted footplate or a single swing away legrest mounted on both the left and right-hand sides of the chair. To help you make the most informed decision, this article summarises the crucial factors that determine the various options to have and lays out the different features and benefits of each.

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Centre mounted leg rest options

- **Manual fixed angle**

This style of leg rest is often the most basic. Often it will have a fixed size and shape, but higher quality versions feature tools that will allow your supplier to adjust the angle, length and footplate width to suit your requirements. However, if you need to make further adjustments at any point, you would need someone to make those changes for you before you'll be able to achieve a better level of comfort.

A centre-mount footplate will often offer the most compact set up and will help with manoeuvrability in much tighter environments. However, it may present a compromise when it comes to ease of transfer — for instance, if you are looking to stand up and get out of the chair rather than having a hoisted transfer.

- **Manual elevating**

Similar to manual fixed angle, this option includes an additional gas strut to elevate the angle of the leg rest. The purpose of the strut is to offer the potential of a more adjustable angle to help with comfort and pressure relief. Keep in mind that these adjustments will often need to be performed by a family member or carer, as it would not be practical for the user to do this themselves while seated in the chair.

- **Powered elevating**

The gas strut is replaced by an electric actuator offering you the opportunity to elevate the leg rest at will. In the powered elevating option, the manual model's gas strut is replaced by an electric actuator, allowing the user to elevate the leg rest at will by via the chair's joystick.

The added level of control gives the user greater independence, enabling them to adjust comfort and pressure relief levels to fit their need. This option does come at a much higher initial cost, as the chair also needs to have a more advanced joystick capable of operating the actuator.

- **Powered elevating and transfer**

This leg rest offers all of the benefits of the powered elevating centre-mount, but the addition of a second actuator allows you to also put the footplate flat to the floor. The result is to allow for a much easier transfer if you are looking to stand up from the chair, rather than being hoisted.

Swingaway legrests

- **Manual fixed angle**

Like its centre-mounted counterpart, the manual fixed style of swingaway leg rest is often the most basic. It similarly will follow a fixed size and shape, offering further options for adjustment, length and footplate angles depending on the quality of the machine. Any further changes still have to be made by someone other than the user.

Swingaway leg rests will often offer the least compact set-up and can hinder manoeuvrability in much tighter environments. What they do offer is a much easier way of transferring if you are looking to stand up and get out of the chair, as they can be

swung to the side of the chair and, in most cases, fully removed from the chair if needed. That way there is no need for a hoisted transfer.

- Manual elevating

As for the above manual fixed angle but with the addition of a gas strut to elevate the angle of the leg rest. As for the above manual fixed angle, only with the addition of a gas strut to elevate the angle of the leg rest, manual elevation offers the potential of a more adjustable angle to help with comfort and pressure relief. This would often need to be done by a family member or carer and wouldn't be practical for you to do this yourself whilst seated in the chair.

- Powered elevating

The gas strut is replaced by an electric actuator offering you the opportunity to elevate the legrest at will through the chair's joystick, offering a much greater independence and opportunity to adjust comfort and pressure relief levels. They do also offer the opportunity to elevate each legrest at a different angle if needed for more comfort.

This does come at a much higher initial cost as the chair also needs to have a more advanced joystick. As with powered elevation, this does come at a much higher initial cost, as the chair also needs to have a more advanced joystick capable of operating the actuator. It also makes the leg rests much heavier and can mean they are not easy enough to swing away for transfers while you're sat in your chair.

