



## Basic Etiquette: People with Mobility Impairments

1. My Chair, My Body - Wheelchairs are NOT footstools, stepladders, or fire hazards. People who use a wheelchair, walker, or cane often consider this technology to be an extension of their body. They are part of an individual's personal space and should be treated with the same dignity and respect. Do not lean on them, push them, or move them without explicit permission.
2. Talk face to face. If an individual uses a wheelchair, sit down and/or position yourself at the same eye contact level.
3. **Always ask** if you can offer assistance BEFORE you provide assistance. If your offer is accepted, ask for instructions and follow them.
4. When given permission to push a wheelchair, push slowly at first. Wheelchairs can pick up momentum quickly.
5. Personally check locations of events for accessibility. Use a checklist (such as those found in Section 3). If barriers cannot be removed, alert persons with mobility impairments before the event so that they can make decisions and plan ahead.
6. Do not ask people how they acquired their disability, how they feel about it, or other personal questions unless it is clear that they want to discuss it. It is not their job to educate you.
7. It is considered patronizing to pat an individual who uses a wheelchair on the back or on the head.
8. Remember that, in general, persons with mobility impairments are not deaf, visually impaired, or cognitively impaired. The only accommodations that you need to make are those that relate to mobility impairment.

## Resources

### **National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)**

Office of Communications and Public Liaison

Bethesda, MD 20892

Voice: (301) 496-5751; (800) 352-9424

Fax: (301) 402-2186

Web site: [www.ninds.nih.gov](http://www.ninds.nih.gov)

### **National Spinal Cord Injury Association**

6701 Democracy Blvd.

Suite 300, #300-9

Silver Spring, MD 20910

Voice: (800) 962-9629; (301) 588-6959

Fax: (301) 588-9414

E-mail: [resource@spinalcord.org](mailto:resource@spinalcord.org)

Web site: [www.spinalcord.org](http://www.spinalcord.org)

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