

## Lubrication

### Cleaning

Wheelchairs really benefit from a good cleaning. Mild soap and water is recommended for the frame and non-absorbent bits. In fact you can clean it as you would a car. Finishing with car polish will add a layer of protective wax to help it to stay clean. If the chair hasn't been cleaned in ages dampening it for a while should soften the accumulated grime. Remember water isn't going to hurt the chair unless it stays wet for days on end. Upholstery can be wiped down with a damp cloth or use fabric cleaning liquids. Cushions need to be dealt with according to the manufacturers' guidelines.

Lubricate where two parts of a chair move relative to each other. Dry lubricants like Teflon™ and graphite tend to be the most user-friendly. They leave a dry film on the material that displaces water, inhibits corrosion, and provides a smooth slippery interface between the two surfaces. Most are compatible with the plastics and metals found on wheelchairs. Teflon dries clear and graphite dries black. Owner's manuals will give a comprehensive list of areas to lubricate.

Over-lubrication can be a problem on wheelchairs. This occurs when too much grease or oil is applied. Dirt, hair and other nasty stuff sticks to the surface and can actually do more harm than good by trapping abrasive particles, not to mention getting the icky stuff on clothing. Whenever lubricants are used bear this in mind and wipe off over spray.

### Quick release axles

If the wheels are not removed on a regular basis the axles tend to seize up. Maintenance of these items is very easy. It needs only to be done on a monthly basis at most.

1. Remove the axle.
2. Wipe it off with a cloth dampened with WD40.
3. Lubricate with dry Teflon™ spray or if you only have WD40 use it and wipe off the extra. (You can even use Pam cooking spray if you have nothing else.)
4. Dampen a cloth with WD40 and wipe off any accumulated dirt from the bearings.
5. Replace the wheel and ensure the quick release plunger extends fully to secure the wheel.

### Bearings



Almost all wheelchair bearings are sealed bearings, which keep out foreign bodies and keep the lubricant inside. The lubricant eventually breaks down and at that time bearing wear increases dramatically.

Spraying WD 40 on the outside of a bearing and wiping it off will not hurt the bearing and will help clean it. Smearing grease on the outside will not help the bearing, it will however attract dirt and abrasive material, which could damage the bearing and certainly make the chair less appealing.

If you want to lube a bearing you have to very carefully remove one of the seals (black bit) using a sharp pointy tool like a pin or knife to expose the cage (shiny bit). Wash the bearings in a solvent and let thoroughly dry before repacking with grease and replacing the seal. Do not use WD40 as a lubricant for bearings, it is too thin and will actually accelerate bearing wear. You can use it as a solvent to clean out the old grease though.