

Ageing gracefully

Four Wheel or Three Wheel? Three wheel scooters are generally more maneuverable at close quarters, but more care should be taken when using ramps etc. as they can become unbalanced. A four wheel scooter is generally better for longer distances and higher payloads, and inherently more stable. They can carry bigger batteries and more accessories.

Range and Speed. Most scooters have gel cell batteries these days. They are safer in crash or roll over situations as they do not leak acid. Batteries can develop a “memory” which can affect the range of your appliance. Go for a long run every now and then and deplete the battery down to 25%, then put it on charge overnight. High speed and long hills use more power than traveling on a level surface. Your batteries are your petrol tank, if the gauge says half, then it’s time to head home.

Safety. All mechanical appliances should be serviced and inspected at least one a year. Folding wheelchairs scooters and electric chairs need particular attention to moving parts and tyres. Sometimes tyres look good from a tread point of view but have perished walls, which may let you down without notice.

Help when you are out. If you have a flat tyre when touring on your scooter, call the NRMA even if you are not a member. The NRMA will respond as a community service. If you fall from your appliance, are not injured and cannot right yourself, call the fire brigade. If you are injured, call an ambulance. A mobile phone is not a luxury, it is a safety item at our age.

Silly little things. Finding your glasses without glasses, how to tell the shampoo from the conditioner in the shower..... Both common problems as we mature. Many clients use coloured ribbons and bright tags to tell which thingy is which.

Security. Don't keep large amounts of cash in your home. If you have sight problems, try to have a friend or colleague with you when using your cheque book or credit cards. A coded key safe is a good Idea. (The type real estate agents use.) Friendlies can get to you in case of a fall.... Sure beats breaking down the door!

Be Prepared. Use sun protection when getting out and about, keep a poncho in the map pocket of the seat in case of rain. A small bottle of water can also be handy, and remember your phone.

Consider others. Keep your speed down in shopping centres and congested areas. Remember that your scooter is very quiet and you may surprise pedestrians when approaching from behind. If you use your horn as a warning, plug in a smile as well!

Exercise. Scooters are designed as a mobility aid, not a complete mobility solution. They can be modified to carry your wheely walker, canes and sticks. Use the scooter or electric chair to get you where you want to go, but always walk when you can. Even short walks help keep you fit.

Plan your future.

You probably know by now what type of assistance or appliances you will need. Don't put it off, plan to acquire the things you need to retain your independence.

