

Mobility Scooters

How do you get around?

Are you still able to walk (as you used to), and still cope, or are you really struggling?

Have you ever found yourself out and faced with just a short walk, but also felt that you don't have the stamina and just want to be at home and lying down in bed, NOW? Or have you ever dreaded going out, because of how exhausted you will feel?

I know that I have, but I now accept this fact and don't fight my symptoms.

In the summer of 2006, I attended an outing to **Marwell Zoo** organised by my support group. The attraction for me, apart from being out with friends, was that electric mobility scooters were provided for us. Then as now, I could not have considered walking around the zoo and enjoying a day out. I just did not have the capability. I knew that even a small amount of exertion would cause me to be bed bound for many days afterwards.

The support group organises such outings in order to enable people to discover in a fun environment, surrounded by friends the joys of using mobility scooters.

Prior to this day, I had never used or even sat on one. In fact I had never even thought about using a scooter, let alone given any consideration to it. Out and about, I saw frail and elderly people being exceptionally mobile and self sufficient and independent. The idea had not occurred to me that I was in such a similar situation and might also benefit.

Even though I had lost ability and capability, it had not occurred to me that for all intents and purposes that I was also considered as disabled.

At the zoo, within a few yards, I appreciated freedom again. All of us had a wonderful day. We were metaphorically running around from one animal enclosure to another. We were laughing and shouting to each other. We had more fun than a school party visiting at the same time and many kids told us how cool we were!

At the end of the day, we were naturally exhausted from a good day out. But it was exhaustion from enjoying ourselves with freedom of mobility and movement. One member, a (young) grandmother who liked to take her grandchildren out, but had to give up due to her health, was beaming and looking forward to taking them out again.

I promised myself that after joining my local **Shopmobility** and trying a few different scooters to see which I found most suitable, that I would buy one. I was sold! I did join my local **Shopmobility** as well as **Wessex Shopmobility** and spent a period of time hiring and trying out 3 and 4 wheel scooters in a variety of environments and assessing their various features and benefits, before I eventually bought one that I felt was most suitable. I would recommend you to do similar.

Since then, I have not looked back! Due to my greatly increased and enhanced mobility, my quality of life has improved beyond comprehension. Those days of being totally housebound or bedbound are a distant memory and frustration.

I don't have to think if I have the strength to go out. I just go out. In fact, if feeling a bit down, I especially go out and feel invigorated!

Now, when people see me get off my scooter and see me walk a few steps or do some small activity, they comment:

“Why do you need a scooter if you can walk?”

My response is always:

“It is because I use my scooter for energy sapping walking and getting around that I can do these other things”.

Don't worry about thinking “I'm not that disabled”. Just think about saving energy, the energy that you would use instead for enjoying yourself! Think of the independence and ability to go out and be self sufficient.

It will take a bit of getting used to, but you will soon see how useful it is. It saves a lot of energy and makes the day a lot more enjoyable.

A scooter is a more modern way to get around, but it needs to be practical. Is it suitable for how you wish to use it? And what sort of cost is involved? If it is important to you, can you get it in the car?

When you are out on your scooter, you will find that people stop to talk to you about it and you get lots of friendly comments in passing – their reaction is always very friendly. I must admit that I particularly enjoy the number of doors opened for me by smiling women.

Don't be ashamed of using a scooter, it's a great way to get to talk to people.

How do you feel on a scooter? You get your independence back! You can now go to all sorts of places, where you couldn't previously.

During winter, I have spent 4 weeks in The Algarve. I drove my scooter to the aeroplane doors where it was placed in the hold. At the other end, I got off the aeroplane and rode it all the way through customs and baggage claim out to the courtesy coach to the hotel. Every day, I went for days out and lunches. It was loaded on and off coaches by the drivers. And when I went on organised tours, the able bodied tourists showed wistful envy and were asking to have a go. They were exhausted! I had a

great time and was smiling all the time. I could not have survived the airport queues or the holiday without my scooter. I am going to do it again.

Now, on a scooter, you can go exactly where you want – it's hard to describe the difference, but when you go to places like **Exbury Gardens**, you can go and sniff the flowers that you want to sniff!

When you feel right about it, I recommend that buy a scooter. You may need help to decide what type of scooter is most suitable for you – 3 wheel or 4 wheel, ultra light or sturdy etc. The smaller ones will fit easily into any car. It all depends on where you want to use the scooter – shopping, country walks etc. Sturdy, larger ones go to all sorts of places where you couldn't take a manual wheelchair - rough ground, paths marked 'not suitable for wheelchairs' etc.

Go to the local mobility shops to see what they recommend. Most shops are very obliging. They can demonstrate how a scooter will fit into your car – a hatchback is easier than a saloon car, unless you are looking at the ultra light scooters. Most scooters will take apart to go into the car, but some are still too heavy to manage on your own. One shop has a test track where you can try the scooters out. The shops will give you leaflets to study, so you can use these to find out which models are lightest. If you look around for a second-hand scooter, you can often find one which has hardly been used and is a real bargain.

Many of have bought our scooters second-hand – just make sure the battery is in good condition. But then, haggle the price with the vendor and be prepared to replace the batteries.

Don't be embarrassed using a scooter - it's a great way to get to talk to people.

This section includes content contributed by DG

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