

LIFESTYLES

Scooters vs. wheelchairs

Q. I don't walk so well anymore and I'm considering getting one of those scooters that I see seniors driving. What do you know about them?

A. They have become increasingly popular since they were invented in 1968. As more baby boomers hit the market for mobility-assistive equipment, we will see more scooters.

There are about 1.7 million in the United States using wheelchairs or scooters. About 90 percent of these people have manual wheelchairs. There are 155,000 using electrically powered wheelchairs, and 142,000 riding scooters.

Motorized scooters serve the same function as motorized wheelchairs, but the scooters are easier to maneuver and are more versatile. And because they now have sleek designs and are marketed primarily as a product to facilitate movement, rather than to assist the disabled, they appeal to a broader spectrum of the public.

I shopped online for scooters. They seem to range from about \$500 to about \$4,500.

If your doctor submits a written order stating that you have a medical need for a scooter, Medicare will help cover the costs under the following conditions:

- You have a health problem that causes difficulty moving around in your home.
- You're unable to do



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activities of daily living even with the help of a cane, crutch, or walker.

■ You can't operate a manual wheelchair.

■ You're able to safely operate, and get on and off the scooter, or have someone with you who is always available to help you use the device safely.

■ You must be able to use it in your home. Medicare won't cover a scooter if it will be used mainly for leisure activities, or if it's only needed to move around outside your home.

A mobility scooter usually has a swivel seat over three or four wheels, a flat area for your feet and handlebars to steer it. Mobility scooters are usually battery powered.

The scooters come in models with front-wheel drive or rear-wheel drive. The front-wheel-drive scooters are usually smaller and are used indoors. They usually hold up to 250 pounds.

The rear-wheel-drive scooters are used both indoors and outdoors with a typical maximum capacity of 350 pounds. There are heavy duty rear-drive scooters

that can carry up to 500 pounds.

Scooters have a few advantages over wheelchairs:

■ Swiveling the seat of an electric scooter is generally easier than moving the foot supports on most conventional wheelchairs.

■ A major selling point of mobility scooters is that they do not look like wheelchairs, which evoke negative feels in some people.

■ Mobility scooters are usually more affordable than powered wheelchairs.

■ However, there are disadvantages when compared to powered wheelchairs.

■ You need to be upright and have upper-body strength to operate a scooter.

■ Scooters also have fewer options for body support, such as head or leg rests. They are rarely designed for ease of patient transfer from seat to bed.

■ Scooters are longer, which limits their turning radius and ability to use some lifts or wheelchair-designed access technologies such as kneeling bus lifts.

■ Some mobility scooters have low ground clearance which can make it difficult to navigate certain obstacles, such as traveling in cities without proper curb cuts.

If you would like to ask a question, write tofred@healthygeezer.com.

Cicetti is a health care writer with more than 40 years of journalistic experience.

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Is your baby at risk for tooth decay?

BY DEBRA A. LARSON
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Koochiching County
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Did you know early childhood tooth decay is the most common preventable disease for young children and babies? Commissioner of Health Ed Ehlinger reports that the Minnesota Department of Health is making efforts to ensure that every child in Minnesota regardless of race or place has the opportunity for a healthy smile and a healthy start.

Babies at risk for cavities are those living with parents who have had cavities, use a bottle or sippy cup past 1 year of age, eat and drink sweetened drinks and sugary snacks, babies put to bed or naps with a bottle, families without dental insurance or low incomes and children with special needs. Healthy teeth helps your baby to chew food, helps them talk clearly, helps permanent teeth into place, helps the jaw and face make a beautiful smile.

Baby's teeth have a thin-

ner layer of enamel than adults and acid can erode through it fast. The germ causing cavities is passed from parent to baby by saliva. This germ plus sugar makes an acid that attacks baby teeth causing cavities. This happens by giving loving kisses, tasting baby's food, and by cleaning a baby's pacifier with Mom's saliva.

Help your baby or young child brush to prevent cavities. Parents can help by taking good care of their own teeth and eat healthy foods. Pregnant moms can eat healthy foods, brush, get a dental checkup and get prenatal care to help their baby's teeth form. You can ask questions at dental visits, doctor visits or at the public health office.

Learn what to do as your child grows. From the time your baby is born you can lift the lip and look in the mouth wiping their gums with a soft cloth twice per day. This helps you know what your baby mouth looks like. As baby's first tooth

comes in clean it morning and night with a soft cloth. At the age of 2, use fluoride toothpaste the size of a pea on a soft tooth brush. Teach your children to brush, rinse and spit. By the age of 8 years with praise and practice your child will have a healthy brushing habit formed.

To build strong healthy teeth have your baby's first dental visit at 1 year of age, use city water with fluoride, don't share saliva with your baby, wean your baby from the bottle to a cup at 1 year, give only a quarter cup juice per day, give foods that have calcium like cheese, give water between meals and don't dip pacifiers in sweets. If you breastfeed or drink well water, talk with your doctor about fluoride supplements.

Public health nurses in the county offer Fluoride Varnish to help prevent decay to children from the first tooth through 5 years of age.

Call the Health Department for more information at 283-7070.

SENIOR MENU

Hot meals for people 60 or older are served at noon Monday through Friday at Koochiching County Senior Center, 307 Fourth St.

Meals are for anyone, regardless of income. A \$4 donation is suggested. Meals are subject to change. Participants under age 60 are welcome at \$7.50 each.

For reservations call 283-3460 the day before

the meal. Cancellations may be made the day of the meal.

MONDAY
Pork chow mien
Rice
Carrots
Fresh fruit

TUESDAY
Impossible taco pie
Juice
Fruit

WEDNESDAY
Meatloaf

Baked potatoes
Spinach
Applesauce crisp
THURSDAY
Roast turkey
Sweet potatoes
Gravy
Mashed potatoes
Fruit

FRIDAY
Polish
Mashed potatoes
Sauerkraut
Fresh fruit

BIRTHS

The following births have been reported from La Verendrye General Hospital, Fort Frances, Ontario.

Born to:

Troy and Georgia Kreger (nee Jarvis), Harris Hill, Ontario, a son, Gus Douglas James Kreger, 8 pounds, 5 ounces, Jan. 28, 2015.

Dale and Rebecca Barker (nee Arndt), Fort Frances, Ontario, a son, Dean Alec Barker, 8 pounds, 3 ounces, Feb. 4, 2015.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS OF KOOCHICHING COUNTY

Join us as *The Journal* reflects with gratitude on

A FLOOD OF MEMORIES

The Journal will highlight the devastating spring of 2014 and how it impacted, yet united, each of us in Borderland. We'll feature the unsung heroes, businesses, service organizations and community members who donated time and resources. Then and now: family and business recovery efforts. The National Guard: when we were tired, they showed up.



**ACTUAL PERSONAL
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Purchase an ad to thank all who helped you during the Flood of 2014. Share a photo and a message to your unsung heroes!

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