



Family Caregivers
of British Columbia

Family Caregivers of BC

CHOOSING HOME MEDICAL EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

Should you have more questions, we invite you to give our staff a call at our toll-free Caregiver Support Line, open Monday - Friday 1-877-520-3267



CHOOSING HOME MEDICAL EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

There are a great variety of dealers for home medical equipment and supplies available. When purchasing equipment or supplies you need to satisfy yourself that you are getting the best advice and best value for your money and more importantly the best equipment to meet the needs of the person who will be using it.

Often there are several solutions that can help someone regain their independence. It may be a rolling walker that supports them when they walk or maybe an electric scooter that will take them to where they want to be. A reputable and experienced dealer will understand your needs and aspirations.

Pick a dealer that specializes in home medical equipment. You wouldn't buy auto parts at a variety store or home entertainment components at a clothing store. Why purchase home medical equipment at an auto store or box store? An experienced dealer's complete and current knowledge of available products and processes will help you and your family member make an informed choice. You will leave the store knowing that you have the best product solution and after-sale support you need to ensure increased independence and safety.

Points to consider when shopping for medical equipment and supplies:

- When selecting a dealer, do not base your decision to purchase on price alone. Check out the dealer's showroom. Ask to see the same item or product made by different manufacturers and in different models. A reputable dealer will offer a variety of models from different manufacturers for you to choose from.
- Sometimes there are great deals on discontinued and clearance items, but ask why an item is discontinued. The dealer should be able to tell you the reason. Often an item being discontinued has nothing to do with the quality or life span of the product. It may just mean that the manufacturing source has changed or that the colour was not a big seller. A reputable retailer will not sell you something that has proven to have inherent problems with its quality.
- Ask about warranty coverage. Manufacturers offer warranty coverage for their products. Typically the manufacturer will replace faulty parts at no cost to you, but the labour cost will not be covered and you will be required to pay for the time involved with the service call. Ask the dealer what they will do if you are dissatisfied or if the product fails a couple of months after the warranty period ends. A reputable dealer will have considerable influence with the manufacturer and can often, after discussion with the manufacturer, "extend" coverage to keep you satisfied.
- Sometimes "clearance" or "all sales final" items are a great find and a real bargain - if you need them. But be aware that there may be no warranty or parts available. Also be aware that often manufacturers only warrant the product for the original owner. If you purchase a used product, even if it is in great condition, ask about repairs and who will pay?
- More complicated equipment will require a regular maintenance schedule. Ask about repairs and adjustments. Will the dealer include one or more "no charge" service calls? Ask about the frequency and the cost of each visit.



- Also ask about the dealer's service shop and parts inventory. The dealer should maintain a respectable parts inventory to service common problems that might arise.
- Also and more importantly, the dealer should have technicians trained at the manufacturer's factory or by courses given by the manufacturer. A reputable dealer will have an "ego" wall where the certificates for the courses and seminars successfully completed by its technicians will be proudly displayed. Look for these certificates, and if you cannot see them, ask about the staff who will service your product should the need arise.
- Lastly, if you see the product you want and it comes with different options or colours but what you want is not in stock, ask about delivery times. It is normal for a dealer to request a deposit, usually 20%, and up to 50% on custom items. The deposit is usually non-refundable, if the dealer gets the product for you in the time agreed. However, be wary of dealers who will not commit to a firm delivery date - they may be having cash flow problems or problems with their suppliers. A reputable dealer will be happy to write on the invoice at the time you make the deposit a firm delivery date at which time you are will be entitled to receive all your deposit back. Sometimes delays happen for reasons beyond the dealer's control. Often in this situation you can negotiate a further discount for your inconvenience.
- If you cannot get to the dealer's showroom, the dealer will be pleased to visit you at your convenience at your place of residence for an assessment for a wide range of products, at no charge to you. They will absorb the labour costs and travel costs in the hope of making you a client. You should make sure that such a visit is at no charge and no obligation to you to purchase anything. If the dealer does not get your business this time, well maybe in the future you will give it to them - if they have earned it.
- Once the dealer has helped you choose the best product for your needs, the dealer will ensure that it is set up properly to serve you in the best possible way.
- A reputable dealer will listen to your challenges and a good one will show you a multitude of solutions that can get you going again. They want to help you stay in your home safely. When it comes time to install the equipment, the dealer will have trained technicians who will ensure that your accessibility product is set up right and that you fully understand how to use it to give you the greatest benefit.
- Helping to make you and your family member's life barrier-free is one of the most satisfying reasons we do what we do. Let us help you remove some of the obstacles that keep your loved one from enjoying their life to its fullest potential.

By Dave Coulter, MEDICChair, www.medichair.victoria.ca, Victoria: (250) 384-8000, Sidney: (250) 656-6228