USE OF WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE SCALE

FOR: RN. LPN, PCA, MA, CLINICAL AMBULATORY PRACTICE STAFF

PURPOSE: HOW TO WEIGH PATIENTS WHO USE WHEELCHAIRS

GENERAL GUIDELINES:

1. When weight is a requirement for provision of patient care, all patients should be weighed
2. Patients who use wheelchairs and are not able to stand or maintain balance on a standard scale platform should be weighed on a wheelchair accessible scale or a portable lift with a scale
3. All practices should know where the closest wheelchair accessible scale is located if it is not located in the immediate clinical area

PROCEDURE

1. Remove excess weight from the wheelchair, such as book bags, backpacks, etc. Any equipment that may be fixed to the wheelchair or necessary for the operation of the chair or needed to support the patient should be left on the chair. Documentation of wheelchair weight should include a list of the equipment attached to the wheelchair that is also weighed.
2. Ask the patient to remove extraneous items such as coats and heavy sweaters when being weighed.
3. Have the patient roll his/her wheelchair/scooter onto the scale and lock the brakes for safety.
5. Have the patient roll off the scale and then help the patient transfer to a safe location, e.g. chair, hospital bed or exam table.
   a. Have the patient transfer to another surface. In some cases, the patient can do this on his/her own; in other cases, the patient will need assistance and/or the use of a (portable) lift. Care giver should consider patient’s report on ability to self transfer when determining how to transfer patient to another surface.
   b. During the transfer, carefully monitor the patient, and provide for balance and support as needed.
   c. If safe location is in a separate room from the scale, explain procedure and let patient know that care provider will be taking wheelchair to weigh it and how the patient can request assistance at safe location if patient is alone and needs assistance before care provider returns.
   d. Roll the empty wheelchair back onto the scale and weigh. Document weight in the patient’s chart for future use. (Note: **There is no standard weight for a wheelchair.**)


e. Obtain instructions from patient on how to bring motorized wheelchair/scooter to scale.

6. Subtract the weight of the empty wheelchair from the combined weight of the patient and wheelchair to obtain the patient’s weight.

7. Document the patient’s weight in the patient’s chart; document the weight of the empty wheelchair/scooter in the patient’s chart.

8. Always confirm with the patient on a follow up visit if the wheelchair/scooter is the same as at the previous visit. If it is the same, it does not need to be weighed separately again. In this instance, the patient should be weighed in his/her wheelchair and the weight of the wheelchair (as previously documented in the patient’s record) should be subtracted from the total weight. If the wheelchair is not being weighed, remember to remove book bags, etc from wheelchair before weighing patient and wheelchair.

9. Wheelchair scales may also be used to weigh patients with limited mobility or who have difficulty maintaining their balance.
   a. Place a chair (preferably an armchair) on the scale and document its weight.
   b. Have the patient sit on the chair.
   c. Weigh the patient and chair together.
   d. Provide assistance to patient throughout weight measurement procedure.
   e. Subtract the chair’s weight from the combined weight of the chair and the patient to get the patient’s weight.