

Active Health Column

with
Lorraine Petterson



Assistive Devices – Beds & Accessories

Who would ever think a bed could be classed as an assistive device? Technically it isn't but in practice a bed can be an incredible assistive device, both to the user as well as the carer, as many on the market now have a host of functions. Beds come with manual or hydraulic functions and then we have the excellent electric versions with remote control so the user is able to adjust as necessary.

Let's start with the electric bed. These range from the industrial hospital versions to the home care versions which have all the functions of an electric hospital bed at a much lower price, i.e. high – low (bed can be raised up or down to suit the user or carer – definitely a huge help); full fowler (user can adjust backrest or raise knees or both at the same time); trendelenburg & anti-trendelenburg positioning (bottom of bed can be tilted a few degrees higher than the head or vice versa)



The huge plus in having an electric bed is that the user, in most cases, is able to adjust all functions on their own, without relying on the carer to manually adjust positioning.

Next we look at hydraulic beds. Usually a hydraulic bed will have between 2 to 4 functions and these work by means of hydraulic gear mechanic systems, either foot or hand which adjust to the chosen position. Hydraulic beds are sturdy and durable and used by many nursing homes and clinics.

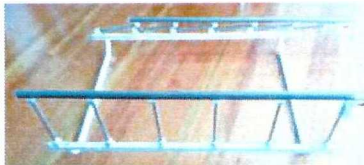
A good hydraulic bed will cost virtually the same as a home care electric so my advice here is to think carefully and if in a home situation maybe look at the electric for

ease of use. Next we have a range of manual beds and by manual I mean adjusted manually by hand cranking. These beds are much more economically priced and our all time best seller is the 2 function which has full fowler positioning (backrest and knee rest).



They also come complete with a pair of folding bed sides. These are ideal beds for people who spend some time in bed and who need the security of cot sides. There are a number of manual beds in the market place, some of them also have a high-low feature which as I've explained is invaluable to carers and prevents backache.

For children there are also a variety of paed and juvenile beds available, either with folding or fixed cot sides and many have adjustable backrests. For a growing child my recommendation would be the 2 function manual bed as this should last many years if looked after properly.



In terms of mattresses, there are a host to choose from and these range from budget to superior. You must always bear in mind that if you take a budget mattress because it's cheap, it's only going to last a maximum of one year because the foam is not high enough density to withstand constant pressure and before you know it there are huge indents that don't disappear. I always recommend clients purchase either a contract mattress (one up from budget) IF they are going to use this with an alternating pressure mattress OR a superior mattress which is layers of high density, chip and memory foam. Also bear in mind that a budget mattress will have a PVC cover which will be very hot to lie on as opposed to the much cooler nylon cordoba waterproof cover.

An alternating pressure mattress is crucial for people who spend long hours in bed and those who are at risk of pressure ulcers or sometimes known as dicubitus ulcers. These mattresses are designed to treat existing ulcers (sores) and prevent any from forming. The interlinked tubes

of the mattress varies air pressure on a 12 minute cycle so that no part of the body bears weight for more than a few minutes at a time. Each mattress is supplied with a low pressure, high flow pump and these can literally become life savers for those at high risk of pressure sores.



I can't talk highly enough of these wonderful inventions and have seen incredible results in people with dreadful pressure sores. They are designed to lie on top of an existing mattress, have clip on covers for ease of washing and are always fully waterproof.

Another best seller is the adjustable bed backrest. Loved by everyone who owns one as its light, with great ventilation, easy to adjust and very hygienic, it adjusts to provide the perfect angle for lying in bed. No more heavy, unhygienic wedges, this is the modern version which is easy on the pocket and great on the back.

Last but certainly not least is one of Mobility Solutions many inventions and our folding bed sides fits any size of bed and is the economical way to sleep in your own bed, without the expense



of buying another. This is the perfect solution for couples who want to stay together in their own bed even when one partner becomes disabled or frail and at risk of falling out. For instance, take a couple in a queen size bed, the one is fit and healthy, the other is frail. One side stays folded out of the way, at all times, the other side can be lifted at night to prevent falls and then at the touch of a button the side folds down flat. We have helped many people stay in the comfort of their own bed and sizes range from single through to king.

I hope this has been helpful to you in some way. I've had so many people say to me they don't know what to do when a loved one comes home from hospital and needs assistive devices and they haven't a clue about the best type of bed or device to help them. If you have any queries at all, please email me on info@mobilitysolutions.co.za and I will be happy to assist you. If you would like a copy of Mobility Solutions latest Disability/Rehab catalogue, please let me know and I will email you by return.

Until next month, take care, keep smiling and to all the carers out there, give yourself a pat on the back and say 'well done me', you all do such a great job and deserve the commendation.

