



## Are Lazy boy chairs fit for purpose in residential care?

Keeping residents mobile for as long as possible is an advantage for residential providers. Mobile residents are easier to look after and cause staff less physical strain. The question is are residential facilities purchasing the best chairs, to encourage mobility?

Many residents, particularly in aged care facilities, spend much of their time sitting in one position. To keep mobile residents need to be able to get out of their chairs with ease. In order to do this, they must:

- have their feet flat on the floor
- be able to wriggle forward in the seat
- push up with the hands on the armrests
- have the right height chair with a seat that doesn't slope backwards

Lazy boy chairs seem to be the chair of choice for many aged care and other residential residents. However are they fit for purpose?

The 'La-Z-Boy' chair originated in America and was based on the reclining patio chair that had a back which swung back on an angle pushing the seat forward. Once they were upholstered, they were marketed as 'comfortable recliner lounge chairs'. When wheels were added to the chairs, they became a common feature in aged care and other residential facilities. Often the wheeled lazy boy takes the place of a wheelchair reducing transfers and opportunities for walking.



Little thought has been given to whether lazy boy chairs fit the needs of residents or the staff caring for them. The standard lazy boy has a number of issues for the residents, mobility, posture and lack of pressure relief. They are generally too low with a seat that slopes backward, making it difficult for the person to wriggle forward and get out of. They are not supportive enough, encourage a fixed slumped posture, which can affect breathing, eating and drinking. For residents who are unable to move themselves they do not offer much pressure relief making them at risk of a pressure injury.

A common practice is to place pressure cushions on the seat of lazy boys, this raises the person higher in the chair, reducing the support from the armrests and increasing the falls risk.

Initially small wheels were fitted to lazy boys making them hard to push especially on carpeted floors; many of these chairs are still around. Larger wheels were introduced to make it easier for care staff to push the chairs; unfortunately this makes the chairs too high for the average resident to place their feet on the floor. This leaves their legs dangling, which is uncomfortable, and encourages them to slide forward in the chair. Even with larger wheels lazy boys are heavy to move and put staff at risk of injury.

Electrically operated lifter lazy boys can be useful for people who have limited arm strength and are unable to push themselves up from a chair. They may find the assistance to stand enables them to get up independently and maintain their mobility.

Lazy boy chairs are often not the best choice for older and disabled people or their carers. There are many other options. Therapy Professionals Ltd's friendly Physiotherapists or Occupational Therapists can give unbiased advice on seating which can improve the comfort and mobility of residents in residential facilities. They may also be able to suggest less costly and versatile alternatives.

Just contact us:

Phone: 03 377 5280  
Email: admin@tpl.nz

For more information on choosing chairs for your facility, seating people correctly and pressure areas check out these links.

[https://www.therapyprofessionals.co.nz/uploads/4/9/5/2/49523375/seating\\_people\\_comfortably.pdf](https://www.therapyprofessionals.co.nz/uploads/4/9/5/2/49523375/seating_people_comfortably.pdf)

[https://www.therapyprofessionals.co.nz/uploads/4/9/5/2/49523375/skin\\_injuries\\_caused\\_by\\_pressure.pdf](https://www.therapyprofessionals.co.nz/uploads/4/9/5/2/49523375/skin_injuries_caused_by_pressure.pdf)

[https://www.therapyprofessionals.co.nz/uploads/4/9/5/2/49523375/seating\\_advice\\_for\\_residential\\_care.pdf](https://www.therapyprofessionals.co.nz/uploads/4/9/5/2/49523375/seating_advice_for_residential_care.pdf)