

# Considerations when choosing a stairway lift

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## Stairways: Safety or esthetics?

Stairs come in all shapes and sizes and although building codes have tried to keep some uniformity to the rise and run of stairs, builders and designers are often faced with space restrictions and the desire for aesthetics. This can compromise stair safety.

Pre-fabricated handrails and posts are often made to be a pleasing element of the décor rather than a safe and ergonomic solution. In such cases, the handrail or post can be ineffective (i.e., not properly positioned) and even dangerous as it has not been designed to actually hold the full weight of a person requiring support.

## Client assessment and understanding the stairlift fitting process

A stairway lift is well-suited for a client who generally has the ability to ambulate on flat surfaces but is having difficulty in managing stairs. Conditions that affect strength, balance and endurance are generally those that can create a need to install a stairway lift. There are also



scenarios where, because of budget and construction confinements, the stairway lift is chosen as a device to improve access for a wheelchair user. In these situations, it is important to address the safety of transfer, both at the bottom and the top of the stairs where any mishap could lead to serious injury. It is advised that a careful assessment be conducted by a health professional and that other alternatives be considered if there is a risk of injury.

## Ergonomic design of the lift

All stairway lifts are not created equal. In fact, many are not designed with the human body in mind. People who require assistance need a chair that fits them. A user's balance, cognitive capacity and comfort should be considered when choosing the chair and the lift system. The chair should allow for a natural sitting position with armrests long enough to be used as a support when exiting the chair. The system controls should be intuitive and easy to operate.

## Ensuring value

The key elements that the consumer needs to address with the vendor are quality, design, comfort and reliability, as well as its warranty and reputation. Consumers should ask questions such as: How long have they been in business? Who performs the installation and are they capable of providing after-sale service and maintenance?

Many clients neglect to consider the maintenance aspect when selecting a vendor. A stairway lift is a machine and it will need maintenance and service. Taking pre-emptive action and scheduling maintenance will ensure a lifetime of continuous use.

The stairway lift could become the next standard piece of equipment in North



American homes as the population ages and the desire to age in place becomes the norm. When mobility needs become more common, then products and services become all that much better. As it is, a stairway lift is a very easy solution to a personal and logistical need.

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## About the author

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