

Modifying your Home: Stair lifts

December 2015

Is it difficult for you to get up and down stairs inside or outside your home because of your disability? Maybe there are some modifications that could be made to your home to make it easier for you to move around. The Ministry of Health might be able to help fund these modifications.

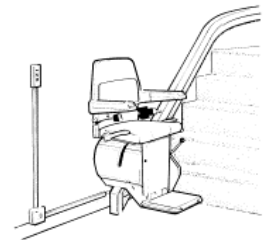
The type of modifications the Ministry of Health can help fund for your home will depend on your disability related needs and situation. They could include:

- hand rails
- a stair lift.

What is a stair lift?

A stair lift has a chair that a person can sit on as the lift travels between floors. The lift travels on a track fixed to the stairs or to the wall alongside the stairway.

Stair lifts can be used for stairs either inside your home or outside to get in or out of your home. The chair folds up against the wall when it is not being used, so that other people can walk up and down the stairs.



Is a stair lift the best option for you?

For the stairways into or around your home to work well for you, you need to think about how you get around, what your needs are and what your home is like. If you need to use a wheelchair or have trouble sitting, a stair lift may not be the best option for you.

The main things to think about

- Will you be able to get on and off the stair lift by yourself? How long do you think you will be able to do so – at least a couple of years more? And how long do you think you might be living in your present home – will you be there for at least two more years?
- Will you be operating the stair lift yourself or will you need someone to help you?

- Do you have a single flight of stairs or is there more than one flight of stairs? Does the stairway curve? The lift needs to travel the whole length of the staircase, not just one flight or part of a curved stairway.
- Is there enough space on the stairs for the lift's track to run along beside them? Generally stairs need to be at least 1 metre wide so that there is enough space beside the track for other people in your home to walk up and down the stairs safely.
- Is there enough space at the top and bottom of the stairs for you to get on and off the lift safely?

You may also want to think about moving to a home that is more suited to your needs.

Getting a stair lift

Contact a Ministry of Health Equipment and Modification Service (EMS) qualified housing assessor to help you work out if a stair lift best suits your needs. They will help you work out the most cost-effective option for your needs and if you can get funding help from the Ministry of Health.

EMS qualified housing assessors are occupational therapists. You can contact them through your:

- local district health board
- Needs Assessment Service Coordination (NASC) organisation
- GP
- www.otnz.co.nz/public/find-an-occupational-therapist/
- Enable Information on phone: 0800 17 1981.

You may also choose to organise and pay for the stair lift yourself.

Ministry of Health funding

- If you have already paid for any modifications to your home yourself, generally you cannot claim back the cost from the Ministry of Health.
- The Ministry of Health has a limited amount of funding available for housing modifications to support disabled people. They use a **prioritisation tool** to make sure this funding is used as fairly as possible. The prioritisation tool compares your current needs and how much you will benefit from the home modifications with other disabled people's needs.
- Generally you can only get Ministry of Health funding once for a particular type of modification.

- Funding up to a maximum of \$15,334 (including GST) is available for modifications to get into, out of and between levels of your home, including installing a stair lift.
- Outdoor stair lifts do not need to be covered in order to be effective. You (or the home-owner if it is not you) will need to pay any cost for covering your outside stair lift from the weather.
- If the total cost of the modifications to your home is more than \$8,076 (including GST), you will have to have an **income and cash asset test** to work out whether you need to pay any of the cost yourself. The total cost includes the cost of any other modifications that the Ministry of Health has already funded for you since you turned 16 years of age.

A stair lift for a child aged 15 years or younger does not need an income and cash asset test. (Find out more about the income and cash asset tests process in our factsheet *Modifying Your Home: Income and Cash Asset Tests*.)

Repairs and maintenance

- Stair lifts need regular maintenance to keep them in good working order.
- The home-owner is responsible for all costs associated with maintaining a stair lift, including any repairs, replacement or removal. The stair lift becomes the home-owner's property, even if it has been fully or partly funded by the Ministry of Health.

For more information about stair lifts

If you live:

- **in Auckland or Northland:**
 contact **Accessible**
 Freephone 0508 001 002
 Email info@accessible.co.nz
- **anywhere else in New Zealand:**
 contact **Enable New Zealand**
 Freephone 0800 17 1981
 Email: enable@enable.co.nz



December 2015
 HP 6333