THE IDEAL STAIRLIFT GUIDE
Which stairlift is right for you?
WHICH STAIRLIFT IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

This booklet will explain everything you need to know about stairlifts including :-

- The huge difference a stairlift can make to your enjoyment of like (and those that live with you as well).
- How easy to operate and reliable the new modern stairlifts are.
- How neatly the new designs fit in and become a welcome addition to your home.
- The design features that are available in terms of safety, comfort, accessibility, compactness and ease of operation.
- How quick and easy it is to fit a stairlift no matter how complex the stair layout.
- A overview of the types of staircases we at EMS stairlifts can cater for.
One Small Step?

There are a few people who could claim, at the end of a long hard day, to relish the climb upstairs to bed. Even the youngest, fittest legs get tired and for the rest of us that last push up the stairs if often greeted with a sigh and a groan. But for those of us with a degree of disability, or those simply feeling our age, the stairs can become a real obstacle in our own home. In some cases the difficulty can effectively cut your living space in half, with only the downstairs rooms in regular use. For others it may mean that friends and family start to feel worries that the stairs are simply not safe.

And if any of this sounds familiar...

then this may well be the point when a stairlift starts to become worth investigating - for there really is no need to struggle - and even less need to consider moving.

Reclaim your home!

It may well be that you can still manage the stairs on your own, however stairlifts are not just for people who can’t get up stairs at all, they are for anyone who could benefit from a little extra support.
Stairlifts can make a real difference!

Why struggle up and down your stairs everyday when a stairlift can alleviate the effort and risk of hurting yourself. Why risk a wobble at the top or even worse a fall when you don’t need to? Worse still why feel pressured into moving out of your home for the fear of using the stairs?

A stairlifts opens up your living space again and enables you to continue living as you have always done before. Leaving you with the energy and confidence to continue with what really matters - enjoying your home!

Stairlifts can be fitted in just about any home and to just about any staircase. With modern technology and engineering very few staircases will be too small and awkward.

We at EMS Stairlifts have even managed to install a stairlift to a spiral staircase. Not only can a stairlift be installed to those awkward staircases modern stairlifts have been designed to compliment the home you have spent all those years getting exactly as you want. After all why should you make drastic changes?

Stairlift manufacturers now recognize that excellence in engineering is no longer enough and the market leaders all employ top designers to ensure their stairlifts will compliment, not detract from, the appearance of your home.

Most can be fitted, quickly, with the minimum of fuss and bother in just a few hours.

Stairlifts can completely change the way you live your life in your home.
The History Of The Stairlift

The earliest stairlifts can be traced back to the early 1920’s and, like so many innovations, to America, where polio epidemics had left a large number of people with mobility problems and struggling to get about their own homes. C.C Crispen, a Pennsylvanian entrepreneur, and self taught engineer, decided to put his mind to addressing the needs of an ailing friend when using the stairs in his apartment. Crispen’s idea was simple: to create a seat that could climb the stairs. He took rather a linger working out how to actually make it, but after long hours in the workshop, he completed construction of the worlds first stairlift, which he christened the Lnclin-ator. As the rest, as they say is history, Suffice to say that whilst of course the latest design employ cutting edge technology - at their heart they fulfill the same noble purpose - making like easier, for those who need it most.

EMS have proudly provided
A Mechanical Breakthrough

At it's most simple, a stairlift is just a drive system connected to a chair capable of traveling up and down a staircase. In the earliest stairlifts that drive mechanism was likely just ropes attached to a small motor to drag the chair up a track. As technology progressed, rope was replaced with chain and a simple gearbox. Essentially a cable was reeled in or fed out from a motor housed at the top of the stairs in order to move the chair. These cables - often little more than a glorified bicycle chains required continual lubrication and replacement in order to function. Whilst a few manufactures still doggedly employ chair systems, the majority having moved over to a much safer, more efficient and practical rack and pinion system. Withe the new stairlifts systems the chair itself has the power to climb up the fail, rather than being merely dragged from above.
The Fitting Process

The first stage of the process will always be a home visit or survey. The stairlifts company will need to establish your requirements, degree of mobility and the specific design and measurements of your stairs. They may require some general detail from you such as your approximate weight and height etc. to ensure your stairlift is just right for you as well as your home.

Many people express concern that their stairs are some how unsuitable, but these days this would be very unlucky. For, whilst the exterior of home may vary a great deal, with a few notable exceptions, stairs follow a fairly standard design and there will be options for almost every situation.

A well trained EMS Stairlifts professional, will offer the chance of a demonstration in the UK’s largest stairlift showroom and provide literature and might bring small samples of rail, or even seat cover swatches. With over 25 years experience of fitting stairlifts we will be more than happy to run through with you any lingering questions about the process.

Our surveyor will ask you if you are left or right handed and ask you to describe any problems you are having at the moment in order to establish your degree of movement.

Once they made a note of your needs, they will carefully look at the layout of your stairway, check their condition and make accurate notes of any special requirements that may be involved there. If for example the end of the stairwell runs very close to a door frame, they may need to use a hinged track at the base of the rail, that when not in use can be flipped back out of the way so it doesn’t become an obstruction. This is all quite normal, and very easy.

As all stairlift systems are essentially made to measure, We will collate all the information we have gathered and tailor your stairlift solution to match your individual requirements, before presenting a proposal and a quote for your specific job.

Once you are completely happy with our proposed plans we will set to work having your stairlift constructed.

Once fully tested and we will call to arrange a fitting date that suits you. In some cases, this can be as little as a few days.
Choosing a stairlift to suit your home

In their simplest form, staircases divide into two categories:

- Those that go up in a straight line.
- Those that turn to go around corners at certain intervals.

Whilst every staircase is slightly different and is assessed on its individual merits - it is highly unlikely that a stairlift cannot be fitted - no matter whether you have square corners, continuously curved walls or even “S” Shaped bends! Here are some of the more common layouts and suggested solutions - which can equally be applied to left or right handed walls.

**The Perfect Straight**
The simplest option is you have a perfectly straight staircase. Folding rails can be used where rails cause obstruction, perhaps at the foot of the staircase.

**90 Degree Square Corner**
This is where a curved rail stairlift would be deployed to safely take its passenger all the way to the top. The rail can turn left or right as many times as necessary and can be secured on the banister or wall side according to your requirement.
Curved Stairlifts
Curved stairlifts are capable of following the stairs through gently angled bends of between 90 to 180 degrees. Most staircases will kink 90 degrees at the top of the stairs before you reach the landing. They fit closely to the wall to minimalise intrusion and can be adapted to follow almost any staircase.

Hinged Stairlift
With all the features of straight stairlifts at EMS we offer an the option of a folding rail. This allows the track to be folded up out of the way to allow access.

Spiral Stairlift
We at EMS Stairlifts have installed numerous stairlifts to spiral staircases. Along with providing a neat and easy to use stairlift system. We always make sure the staircase can be used by able bodied users.
What happens when you get to the top?

Straight and Platform or turn the corner?

Most stairs turn at 90 degrees when you get to the top, therefore the stairlift designers now give you two options in terms of where you would like to stop.

Turn the Corner

This method of stopping at the top allow the stairlift to be parked out of the way of the staircase. Taking the stairlift on the landing would allow easy dismount and other more room to negotiate passing the lift.

Swivel seat option

The swivel seat option allows the seat to turn at the top of stairs when the lift reaches full height.
Design and Style

Modern machines can be very stylish - a million miles away from the old ugly machines of 30 years ago. By employing designers and interior specialists, manufacturers are now producing award winning stairlifts that can also like your home with their elegant lines.

They maybe be packed with more safety features than ever before, but there’s no reason why they can’t also be both stylish and practical.

In fact there are more and more options out there, and you should be able to find exactly what you want. Often you can even select a seat upholstery specifically to make your decorations and individual taste.

Use

It’s imperative that your stairlift caters for all your needs all our stairlifts are designed to swivel then lock, allowing you to use the arm rest to support your weight as you stand up or sit down with confidence, When not in use, simply fold back the seat and foot rest , which will allow other members of the household to use the staircase unimpeded.
Folding Seat and Footrest

Reduces the space taken up by the stairlifts when it’s not in use. Keeps things tidy and allows other members of the household to use the staircase impeded. The folding seat allows users who cannot bend their knees to use the stairlift. This design also works well on very restricted staircases.

DC Battery

A DC Battery is the power behind your chair. Being Battery operated allow the lift to be quiet, smooth and there be no risk of wires becoming tangled or receiving an electric shock.

Infra Red Remote

Call your lift! Summon your lift to your feet your required.
Safety Edge
The mechanical sensors on the main edge surfaces gently halt the stairlift if an obstacle is detected in its projected path.

Locking Key Switch
Disables the stair at the turn of a key to prevent unauthorized use.

Safety Belt
The integral seat belt will ensure you are safe and secure on your stairlift.
Safety

Safety is the foremost consideration when designing and installing a stairlift and long hours will have been spent ensuring that its construction meets the most stringent of standards. The move to DC batteries was a great step forward and further refinements have occurred in the shielding and protection of the mechanics of the chair. Moving parts are normally now housed in maintenance free self lubricating enclosures that prevent inquisitive fingers, cats tails and loose clothing getting caught in their workings. Stairlifts have also become more intelligent. Tiny on board sensors and processors are now built in to their critical systems and provide sufficient brain power to be aware of your sitting position, before departure. Only once you have adopted the correct posture and are safely settled will it let you start your journey. They have even become sophisticated enough to sense actively obstructions in their path, and slow to a gentle stop if something is blocking your stairway and with dual mechanical/electrics braking and an over speed governor’ there is no possibility of an unexpected or uncontrolled descent. In addition almost all units will be supplied with a lock off key/button to stop misuse and mischief from visitors to your home. Visits from curious grandchildren need not be filled with worry. Simply lock off the stairlift when your hear the doorbell and no matter how much they may want to your stairlift is out of bounds. Of course good old fashioned features such as lap belts and seat belts are in place and used in conjunction with cutting edge technology and features now on board, modern stairlifts are the safest ever.
Control

Some stairlifts employ a toggle switch to control their operation, and in older models, those with artrities, painful hands or poor sight might find original smaller ones a little fiddly. Mew machines are however much more rigorously designed and tested with a great deal of time spent ensuring that they are as easy to operate as possible. Companies have taken on board feedback and some have started to replace the toggles with larger paddles and joystick that many find much easier to use.

Your stairlift may also be supplied with small infra-red remote controls. This is especially useful when several people live in the same home and the stairlift is upstairs with you left waiting for it at the bottom or vice versa. Simply blip the call button and rather like hailing a lift, a taxi or commanding your dog to heel, your stairlift will glide to you.
Power

Day to day, most stairlifts will now run off DC batteries, but they also have a mains connection that is used to maintain their charge. With power effectively now on board your seat, the complication and danger of trailing live AC wires, as used in the earliest models, is neatly avoided. On Board batteries also mean that should you experience a power cut in your home, you need not worry about being left high and dry as the battery, and your stairlift will remain operational. In fact a full charge will normally allow 8-10 trips, even in a power cut. Designed to be maintenance free and deliver a smooth flow of power, the batteries should provide years of silent hassle free service for your lift.

Noise

Thanks to cleaver engineering most stairlifts are now so quiet in operation that you can use them freely day or night, without fear of disturbing the rest of the household - or indeed the neighbors. With whisper quiet motors and self lubricating rails there’s simply no need to worry about clanking, banging or things going bump.
Installation

The components for your stairlift will have already been build off site and tested before they were loaded up in order to guarantee that the fitting itself is quick clean and causes the minimum of disruption to your home. The actual process of fitting is far less invasive than you might imagine, with the rails usually supported by the stairs, rather than the walls themselves. A well trained team, will get the job done, long before you’ve run out of tea and biscuits. In fact, depending on the time of year stock levels and your exact requirements some companies are able to complete installations just days after the initial inquiry has been made, such is their efficiency.

They will bring everything they need with them and there’s no need to involve expensive visits from your local electrician as the majority of stairlifts are designed to plug straight in to a normal socket for charging. A straight forward installation could be completed in a little over two hours.

Maintenance

Stairlifts require very little maintenance - in fact there is very little you can do yourself as the mechanics are the most part sealed away in self lubricating enclosure. Over time, however as with all devices with moving parts, friction and wear might mean the small parts need a little adjustment.

Those with stairlifts with digital diagnostics will already have a good idea of how their unit is functioning day to day. However it is a good idea to plan for yearly check ups so that you can help avoid the inconvenience of your stairlift breaking down when you most need it.
Buying options

The market for reconditioned stairlifts is a relatively new phenomenon. Traditionally, old style lifts required such heavy, inflexible rails and fittings that each and every unit had to be individually fashioned at great expense and effort. Once in place they could not be easily adjusted and the whole device was left so specifically altered that it could only ever be used in that one original home.

These days, stairlifts are even more carefully engineered to fit your home. Many companies recommend having a custom built rail for any curved staircase as it allows the stairlift to fit the stairs properly give minimal the intrusion on to the staircase.

Where problems have started to arise is in the advent of unscrupulous sellers on the Internet and in newsagent windows. The prices are often incredibly cheap, but units might prove to be old, possibly faulty and may have a somewhat suspect safety record. Many have simply been ripped out of homes undergoing renovation and really amount to little more than a collection of mechanical parts.

The main problem you will face if tempted by one of these offers (and assuming you have all the bits you need) is finding a company willing to install it for you. Installation is not a DIY operation and no company will want to risk installing a unit without a service history, and expose themselves to litigation as a result of an undisclosed fault or safety issue. It really is a case of let the buyer beware.

Modern stairlifts are designed to be completely safe if properly installed but serious accidents can result when unstrained persons are used. Manufacturers are addressing the issue and seeking to cut out the worst offenders in this ‘grey’ market, by offering customers the chance to buy officially reconditioned units direct from them. These will have been tested to the same standards and will have a full service history. There’s no reason why a well maintained stairlift should not give its new owner many years of dedicated service.

For those on a budget, a little used second hand unit brought direct from an authorized seller might be an option to consider. But you must establish from the outset the guarantees and warranties that will be supplied to avoid unexpected expense further down the line.
Showroom

The UK's largest Stairlift Centre is based in Baldock Hertfordshire and has excellent access for disabled visitors and ample free parking. Easily accessible from the A1(M) Junction 9, a warm welcome awaits you. There is always a professional stairlift advisor on hand to explain the various features of the equipment on display and you may try as many as you wish. EMS Stairlifts will be able to give you some general pricing information when you are here, though in order to give you a more accurate quote it is recommended free home survey is carried out. Curved Stairlifts in particular cannot be priced accurately until we have sight of your staircase. EMS Stairlifts do not sell on the premises, so there is never any “hard sell” or pressure to purchase. It is entirely your choice if or when you want to invite our surveyor to visit your home to measure and price a lift for you.
“We all want to stay in our own homes for as long as possible and having a stairlift is a big part of retaining our independence.”

Mrs Taylor

For free expert advice call:
01462 499700