

## Enjoying the Ride

### IntimateRider helps people with disabilities have better sex

By [JENNIFER PARKS](#)

Imagine never having sex again.

Not because you can't find a willing partner, or because the desire isn't there. But because sex, due to disability or limited mobility, is too physically painful to relax and enjoy it, and each attempt is, thus, mental pummeling to your self-concept as a sexual being.

This was the case for Brian Chavez, who fell from a six-storey parking garage two years ago and became a paraplegic, losing most of his mobility from the waist down.

"I went from having a very active sex life before the accident, to not really having one at all," says the 34-year-old Minnesotan.

"It was no longer accessible to roll over or get on top. If you wanted to have sex you just had to lay there and the woman would have to facilitate everything," says Chavez. "It was tremendously hard psychologically."

#### EASIER LOVEMAKING

Today, people like him are benefiting from the problem-solving dexterity of another disabled man from Minnesota, who wanted to turn his personal tragedy into something positive.

Alan Tholkes became a quadriplegic in 1976, when he was just 17 years old. A car accident confined him to a wheel chair and affected mobility in all four limbs.

"Sex wasn't impossible. I had sensations in all the critical areas, but my motor function was lacking. Certain positions just weren't possible. You could get creative but generally the physical stamina wasn't there," says the designer of ergonomic office furniture and supplies.

Last year, prior to getting married, he wanted to do something to give himself and wife-to-be more options.

He came up with the prototype for the IntimateRider, a perpetual motion compact gliding chair that facilitates easier lovemaking for people, like himself, with limited upper body movement.



**Brian Chavez, the poster boy for IntimateRider, demonstrates the ease of this mobility glider.**

Unlike the popular weightless support Love Swing, which has been on the market for years, his invention catered to those with more serious mobility issues.

"It provides easy motion, rocking back and forth at the right height and position. It basically puts all your parts together in the right places, making the thrusting motion really easy. You can go for hours," says Tholkes, who admits the R&D work with his wife was lots of fun.

"I'd say 'Honey, it's time to go to work.' We had a great time."

The product hit the market last year and so far response has been positive, especially among groups of individuals with serious arthritis, back pain and partial-paralysis.

"If you're a 17-year-old male, sex is on your mind a lot. It's an important part of your life at that point, but when you're injured and confined to a wheel chair, your focus is on rehabilitation, taking care of yourself, learning to dress and feed yourself again. The subject of sex just didn't come up for a long time," says Tholkes, noting in the U.S. there are between eight and 11 thousand spinal cord injuries every year.

Most of them involve 18-to-25-year-old males in their prime risk-taking years. There are currently an estimated 36,000 Canadians living with a spinal cord injury, according to the Canadian Paraplegic Association.

## DREAM COME TRUE

Tholkes says his sex life has improved exponentially.

"Woo-hoo! It's fantastic. It's been such a long time, over 30 years, since I've been able to experience some positions. Now sex is easier and more adventuresome and fun," he says.

Chavez is also now the poster boy for IntimateRider and says the apparatus gave him his freedom and sexual identity back.

"At least I can enjoy and perform and visualize again. I'm more comfortable with where I'm at. It's helped me to want to have sex again," he says.

"When you lose something you don't know what it's worth until it's gone. I really missed having sex," says Chavez. "I think this (apparatus) could explode. It's every disability dream about sex coming true."

After all, he admits, the mental hurdles of living with a disability are 100 times greater than the physical.

"We're pretty much sexual beings. There's a whole lot more than the physical act that makes it good," says Chavez.

Now he can sit back and enjoy the ride.

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The IntimateRider

Cost: The IntimateRider retails for \$495 US (around \$530 Cdn)

Where: This mobility glider can be bought online at [www.intimaterider.com](http://www.intimaterider.com)