

Gurney

A **gurney**, known as a **trolley** in British medical context, is the U.S. term for a type of stretcher used in modern hospitals and ambulances in developed areas. A hospital gurney is a kind of narrow bed on a wheeled frame which may be adjustable in height. For ambulances, a collapsible gurney is a type of stretcher on a variable-height wheeled frame. Normally, an integral lug on the gurney locks into a sprung latch within the ambulance in order to prevent movement during transport. It is usually covered with a disposable sheet and cleaned after each patient in order to prevent the spread of infection. Its key value is to facilitate moving the patient and sheet onto a fixed bed or table on arrival at the emergency room. Both types may have straps to secure the patient.



Medical personnel using a collapsible gurney.

Standard gurneys have several adjustments. The bed can be raised or lowered to facilitate patient transfer. The head of the gurney can be raised so that the patient is in a sitting position (especially important for those in respiratory distress) or lowered flat in order to perform CPR, or for patients with suspected spinal injury who must be transported on a long spine board. The feet can be raised to what is called the trendelenberg position, indicated for patients in shock.

A fairly recent innovation is the addition of battery-powered hydraulics to raise and collapse the legs automatically. This eases the workload on EMS personnel, who are statistically at high risk of back injury from repetitive raising and lowering of patients.

Special "bariatric gurneys" are used for obese patients. These are both wider and have a higher weight capacity compared to standard equipment.

The name *gurney* comes from its similarity to a horse-drawn cab patented in the U.S. in 1883 by J. Theodore Gurney. Advanced models of collapsible gurneys have a lower frame that can fold up on contact with the rear deck of the ambulance, and have a securing device that mates with a counterpart inside the ambulance to keep it from moving during transport. Shelves, hooks and poles for medical equipment and intravenous medication are also frequently included.

Gurneys in hospitals come in two types:

1. Non-power assisted: Totally manually powered.
2. Power assisted: Uses a small motor to help amplify the push energy. Usually used in bariatrics departments with heavy patients.

A gurney has some resemblance to a wheelbench. The difference is that the gurney is primarily made to move patients around in a hospital. A wheelbench is usually more comfortable for long distances or outdoors, than a gurney.

Article Sources and Contributors

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