

Bathroom Safety

Why is bathroom safety important?

Bathrooms can be a dangerous part of the home. Common bathroom accidents include scalds, fainting from heat, falls, and poisoning.

Bathroom floors

Linoleum or tile on bathroom floors can be slippery even when dry. A loose rug, sock, or soft slipper can easily slide on it.

Bathroom floors can be even more slippery if they get wet, and it's not always easy to see the wet area. After another member of the family or resident of the facility takes a bath or shower, make sure there is no water left on the floor before going into the room.

- Nonslip floors in the bathroom will help prevent slips and falls. You can install nonslip tiles made specifically for the bathroom, or put a coating on tiles that makes them nonslip.
- Don't have loose rugs on bathroom floors.

The bath and shower

You may have more trouble getting in and out of a bathtub or shower stall as you get older, especially if you have muscle or joint pain or stiffness or you are overweight. There are things that can make your bath and shower safer.

- If you are planning to remodel a bathroom or move to a new home, look for a walk-in shower. The shower should have room for a shower seat. It should be easy to reach the shower nozzle and faucets.
- Grab bars can give you some support. They must be long and wide enough to grasp easily, with a nonslippery grip. Grab bars should be strong enough for you to lean on.
- Bathtub safety rails help you get into and out of a tub safely and without stooping. Bathtub safety rails must be clamped firmly to the bathtub. They must give a firm, nonslippery grip.
- Bath and shower stools or seats and transfer benches are helpful if you have a balance problem or weak muscles. Shower stools must have rigid seats and backs. Legs should have rubber tips.
- Handheld showers can be used to direct water over your body while you sit on a stool or in a tub.
- Nonslip pads or strips on the bathtub or shower floor help prevent falls.
- Keep the bathroom door unlocked, in case you need help.
- Use plastic or paper cups and containers in the bathroom so there is less chance of broken glass.

The toilet

It can be hard to get on and off a low toilet. To help lessen the chance of a fall:

- Buy a toilet seat that makes the seat higher, or install a new tall toilet.
- Install a grab bar close to your toilet. Don't try to use a towel bar to support yourself.
- Avoid having to rush to the toilet. You are less likely to fall if you are not in a hurry.

Hot water

Water does not have to be boiling to cause a scald.

- Set your hot water heater thermostat below 120°F (49°C). You can also put in antiscald valves that reduce water flow if it gets too hot.
- Always test the temperature of the bath or shower water with your hand before you get in.
- Don't stay in warm water too long. Keep a small chair or stool in the bathroom so you can sit down if you get dizzy or lightheaded from the heat of a warm bath or shower.

Electrical safety and lighting

- Don't have an electric radio, shaver, or hair dryer near your bath or shower.
- Don't leave electric cords where you could trip on them.
- Have an electrician install ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) to replace outlets near water. This helps prevent electric shocks.
- Always have good lighting in your bathroom.
- Have a night-light in your bathroom.

Medicine safety

- Don't store medicines in a bathroom. The heat and humidity in the bathroom may damage the medicine, and it's important to keep medicines out of the reach of children. Even child-proof lids can be opened by a determined child. This includes both prescription medications and over-the-counter medicines.
- Keep medicines in their original containers.
- Discard any medicines you are no longer using. Also get rid of a medicine if you can no longer read its label or if it's outdated. There should be an expiration date on the bottle.

Tips for safety around children

If you have young children in the home:

- Consider installing a hook-and-eye lock high up on the outside of the bathroom door. Keep it latched when you are not using the bathroom.

- Remove razors, scissors, and hair dryers from bathrooms that children use. Keep them in an adult's bedroom or locked in a cupboard out of a child's reach.
- Make sure that your bathroom outlets are covered, just as they should be elsewhere in your home.
- To prevent poisoning, do not rely on child-resistant caps. Keep all medicines, including vitamins, in a locked closet or up high and out of reach. Keep toilet bowl cleaners, drain openers, and other cleaning supplies in cabinets with childproof locks, or stored in a cabinet that is hard for a child to reach.
- When filled with water, bathtubs are a drowning risk for children. Never leave a child in the bathtub without an adult close enough to reach and grab the child if needed.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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