

BATHROOM SAFETY

BATHROOMS – Tackling a slippery safety issue

Moisture and smooth, slippery surfaces are two things bathrooms have in abundance. Unfortunately they cause nearly 14,000 bathroom accidents each year, most commonly from slips, trips or falls.

The good news is it's easy to avoid this kind of injury by taking a bit of care. Often it's just about keeping as much stuff off the floor as possible, including the water!

Avoid slips

If you don't already have one, stick a rubber mat on the bottom of the bath or shower to prevent slips. If your bath or shower doesn't have recesses for soap and shampoos etc, get a soap dish or a hanging or suction cup shower caddy to keep the bath or shower floor clear.

Also, use a bathmat to step on when you get out of the bath or shower – that means you won't leave slippery puddles. And don't forget to pick it up! You don't want the next person to slip on it or any other towels you might have left lying around. When you've finished drying yourself, always hang your towels up on a towel rail, which ideally is right next to the bath, shower or basin.

Keep spills to a minimum by using a good shower curtain or having a firmly sealing shower door that will keep the water in the shower, right where you want it. If there are any spills, clean them up immediately. Water on bathroom floors is not easy to spot but can be lethal if you slip, especially if you hit something, such as the bath or basin, on the way down.

Grab rails are a great way to help people – especially older people – use the bath, shower or toilet without slipping. Grab rails must be within easy reach, have a non-slip grip and be secure enough to take a person's full weight.

Even without spills, moisture can accumulate in the bathroom so remember to open the window if you can do so safely or, even better, remember to switch on the extractor fan if you have one.

Don't get a shock

Water and electricity do not mix, but in the bathroom they're often side by side, so do all you can to keep them well apart. If you can, use battery-operated items, but if you do have to touch an electrical appliance or switch, dry your hands first!

With heaters, choose hard-wired, fixed heating over portable heaters because electrical cords can cause trips. Position the heater up high on the wall where it can't be touched or splashed.

And remember, if you have children or young visitors, put child locks on your bathroom cabinets, especially ones with medicines or cleaning products.

Follow these tips

If you're designing a new bathroom, these design tips will help:

- Opt for an extractor fan, or if you're just going to use a window, make sure it's easy to reach – leaning over a bath to open the window is a common cause of injuries.
- European 'wet area' showers are safer than a box shower, and avoid a shower over the bath – many people are injured stepping in and out of them!
- Use slip-resistant flooring and don't choose a colour that could hide mould or moisture, such as green or beige.
- Choose fittings and appliances with smooth, rounded edges so if you do take a tumble, hopefully any injuries won't be as bad if you hit something on the way down.
- For child-proofing, position fixtures and fittings so children can't climb up them and get to dangerous areas such as windows or cupboards.

Keeping your bathroom safe is as easy as cleaning up after yourself or taking a few seconds when you go into the bathroom to think about what could become a hazard. If you spot something, pick it up or put it away. Those few seconds could save a lifetime of injury.