

BATHROOM CARE 101

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Bathroom Sinks



The same precautions mentioned for kitchen sink care pertain to bathroom sinks. Clean them often with hot water and soap. If a cleaner or cleanser is necessary, use one that is non-abrasive. Today, it is easy to eliminate the use of glass bottles and jars from the bathroom. This prevents the possibility of chipping the sink if dropped. If acid or medicine spills on the surface, wash the spill immediately.

Bathtubs



Modern bathtubs and showers can be made from a myriad of materials ranging from the conventional enameled cast iron and steel to fiberglass, acrylic, and man-made materials such as cultured marble. Many one-piece tub or tub and shower combination units are made from gel coated fiberglass or acrylic plastic.

Never use abrasives on any of these materials. They can cause scratches to the surface. Usually, they will clean with hot water and soap. If that is not sufficient, a cleaning product recommended by the manufacturer of the fixture, or your plumber, can be used to handle heavier cleaning tasks.

Special non-abrasive polishes are available to protect the finishes of fiberglass and acrylic units. The Polishes seal the material's pores, making subsequent cleaning easier. Choose a product recommended by the manufacturer.

When decorating the bathroom or repairing something near the bathtub, place a heavy cloth over every inch of the bathtub surface so paint, falling tools, etc. will not mar or chip the surface. Do not stand in the bathtub with shoes, as the nails and grit in the soles can scratch the surface.

Cleaning Chrome Plating



Chrome plating is a hard and durable finish that requires little attention except for the occasional washing with soap and water.

Salt air or other corrosive atmospheres have a destructive effect on chrome. Where chromium-plated fittings are exposed to these agents, it is important to wash them frequently. After they are washed and dried, it is advisable to apply a protective coating such as ordinary furniture wax.

Green spots may appear on chromium plating. If this happens, prevent the rust from spreading by scouring the spots with the same kind of powder which manufacturers recommend for enameled, cast-iron fixtures. When the spots have been removed, apply a film of wax. Your plumber will be glad to help you select a good cleanser.

Clogged Bathtub

To clear a clogged bathtub drain, hold your hand or a rag over the waste and overflow plate, cup the plunger over the drain and plunge it vigorously several times. If this does not work, the drain may require cabling to open it.

Clogged Shower Head



If your shower head is giving off an uneven spray it probably means it is clogged with mineral deposits. You can clean the holes with a coarse needle.

Floor Drains

Check floor drains on a regular basis since water in the trap can evaporate which will permit sewer gases to come into the house. Pour a pail of water into the drain periodically in order to make sure of a proper water seal.

Stains at Base of Toilet Bowl

Stains or moisture at the base of the toilet bowl indicate that the joint or seal between the toilet and its outlet has failed and should be reset immediately. This will prevent rotting of the floor, damage to the ceiling below and possible leakage of sewer gas into the home.

Shower Equipment/Scalding Prevention



In new homes and when remodeling, the Illinois Plumbing Code now requires the use of pressure balanced bath/shower valves to prevent scalding.

There is more potential for scalding of a person showering if the pressure fluctuates. Most people aren't aware that young children and older persons can be scalded much sooner than adults. Lowering the water temperature at the water heater will minimize the potential danger at the tub spout or shower head and is the best way to prevent scalding.

A small child doesn't have to soak in overly hot tap water to get scalded. Tragically, injury can happen literally in the blinking of an eye. 150-degree water can scald in just 1/2 second, 140-degree water scalds in just 1 second, but it takes four minutes for water at 120 degrees to scald.

Caution: Never let a small child bathe unattended. In addition, always turn cold water on first, followed by the hot water until the desired temperature is achieved. This prevents exposure to straight hot water.

You need not rush to buy another shower head if the one you have suddenly gives off an uneven spray. It's probably clogged with mineral deposits, which build up in the showerhead and distort the shower stream. If the showerhead holes are clogged, remove the face of the showerhead; clean the back surface and free holes with a coarse needle. The latest showerheads on the market are all self-cleaning and need no such attention. When changing showerheads, wrap adhesive tape around the packing nut or pad the wrench jaws with a cloth so you won't mar the finish.

Shower curtains made of washable fabric can be put into the washing machine or laundry tub. Spreading flat on a table and sponging with sudsy water should clean all other shower curtains. Rinse the curtain with clear water, then wipe with a clean cloth. Turn the curtain over and repeat on the other side. Then replace on the shower rod and spread it out straight to dry. While you're at it, give the shower rod a good cleaning.

Clean prefabricated shower stalls with soap and hot water, but never with a gritty abrasive. New shower stalls usually have fiberglass or acrylic walls, which will not withstand heavy scouring powders. If you stand in it to wash the inside walls, the floor should be protected by a heavy cloth or paper.

Toilets



A clogged trap in a toilet is a ticklish problem, so be careful with whatever method you use for cleaning the drain. Most toilets are made of vitreous china, which might crack if exposed to extremely hot water. A plunger will normally handle simple toilet clogs. Another method of cleaning a toilet trap or toilet is the use of an auger with an adjustable, crank-type handle. Known to plumbers as a "snake," the spring-steel coil is easily worked past the trap and down the pipe. A three-foot auger is inexpensive and will quickly drill through most clogs. Use the auger carefully. Careless handling may crack the toilet. If the rubber-cupped plunger or the auger does not clear the toilet, call your plumber.

Toilet Tank Leak

A small amount of food coloring added to the tank water will help you determine whether the tank ball in the bottom of the tank is leaking. If the coloring seeps into the toilet bowl, the ball or flapper over the discharge opening is not watertight.

If the rubber tank ball in a toilet does not fit tightly over the discharge opening, a defective ball, irregular seat or bent lift wires may be responsible.

Toilet Tanks & Bowls

Toilet tanks and bowls are made of vitreous china and are impervious to ordinary household acids. If something more than hot water and soap is needed to clean them, apply a non-abrasive powder or cleaner recommended by the manufacturer or your plumber. Many good bowl cleaners are on the market today. Most plumbers, however, have found that the chemicals in "blue water" continuous bowl cleaners tend to accelerate the deterioration of the rubber and neoprene parts in the tank.

Seat bumpers (found under the toilet seat) should be replaced if worn. Defective bumpers may cause breakage of the seat or hinges. Stains or moisture at the base of the toilet bowl indicate that the joint or seal between the toilet and its outlet have failed and should be reset immediately to prevent rotting of the floor, damage to the plaster of the ceiling below, and possible leakage of sewer gas into the home.

Tub Clog Removal



When trying to clear a clogged bathtub drain, place a heavy cloth in the bottom of the bathtub so your shoe soles won't scratch the bath's enameled surface. Hold your hand or rag over the waste and overflow plate, cup the plunger over the drain and plunge it vigorously several times. If it doesn't open easily, the drain may require cabling to open it.

Heavy steel spring coils should not be used to clean traps under sinks and bathtubs. A more flexible type of wire or spring should be used—one which is easy to work through the bend of the trap.