



Bath Safety

Taking a bath can be a high risk activity but there are a range of precautions to make it safer.

The Facts

- 1. Having a bath can be enjoyable but also a form of therapy for stiff and sore muscles and joints.*
- 2. Due to the design of modern bath units bathing can become a high risk activity for the elderly or people with a disability.*
- 3. In many cases the risk of a fall outweighs the benefits of having a bath.*
- 4. There are steps you can take to make having a bath safer and more enjoyable.*

Slips, trips and falls

The design of most baths can make it difficult and potentially dangerous for some people to get in and out. Add to this fact that the bath and surrounding surfaces may become slippery from water and soap and you create the right environment for an accident to occur.

The risk increases as you get older or if you experience balance problems or limitations of movement.

Stepping in and out of the bath can be a problem. The level of the bottom of the bath is often different to the level of the adjacent floor. This can make the step hard to judge and become more treacherous.

If the floor is lower and you need to step up into the bath a step placed on the floor may help to make the transition easier and reduce the risk of a fall, particularly when stepping out. Make sure that the step is not able to slip on the floor and has a slip resistant surface. A non-slip mat in the bottom of the bath will also make getting in and out safer.

A clip on handrail fixed to the edge of the bath will also assist in providing support.

If you find yourself using the basin or other bathroom fittings as support when getting in and out of the bath you should consider the addition of a support rail.

Make having a bath safer and reduce the risk of an accident.

Transition assistance

To make the routine of getting in and out of the bath easier and safer you may consider the use of a transition seat.

These seats allow you to sit down on them and then swivel your legs into the bath before gently lowering yourself.

This makes the process easier by breaking down the process of movements into individual steps that can be controlled more easily.

Location of taps and accessories

Bath taps should be located so that they are within easy reach from both inside and outside the bath. If you have to reach too far to adjust the water flow there is an increased chance of losing your balance and falling.

Before you get into the bath make sure you have everything you need within easy reach. Getting in and out of the bath more times than absolutely necessary only increases the opportunity for a mishap.

Consider installing a shelf within easy reach of the bath for soaps, shampoos and other items.

Grab rails

If you need additional support around your bath the installation of grab rails may be the answer.

Ensure that the rails are securely fixed to the wall by the method recommended by the manufacturer. A poorly fixed handrail is an accident waiting to happen.

If you are renovating your bathroom install additional strengthening in framed walls in locations to suit grab rails for the shower, toilet and bath. The effort and cost to do this during renovation is significant less than retro-fitting it later.

Even if you don't need the grab rails installed right away strengthening the wall will provide you with the secure fixing base as and when you need it down the track.

In a framed wall, strengthening can be added by the simple addition of extra noggins at the height and location to suit a grab rail.

Lighting

Poor lighting over the bath can contribute to tripping or falling, particularly if you take your glasses off to have a bath.

Additional lights may assist to make the environment safer. However, bathrooms often have a number of highly reflective or glossy surfaces. If you are adding additional light ensure you are not creating a glare problem with the light selection or location.

Selection of materials

If you are renovating select materials with both safety and style in mind. Choose non-slip floor surfaces and where possible have a colour contrast between horizontal and vertical surfaces.

This helps you distinguish between surfaces and makes moving around your bathroom easier and safer.

Also refer to our Information Sheets on bath lifts and walk in baths.

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