

PAID CONTENT

# Combining Safety and Style in Home Bathrooms

By Steve Milano

More than 230,000 Americans aged 15 and older ended up in an emergency room after suffering an accident in a home bathroom, according to a study of data from 2008 by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Keeping home bathrooms safe doesn't have to cost consumers an arm and a leg or force them to sacrifice comfort and style. Using the right materials, furnishings, lighting and other accessories, homeowners can safeguard their families from injuries and create a beautiful, functional room they'll be proud of for years to come.

**Problems to Look For:** Homeowners should create a plan for safeguarding their bathrooms that address the following areas:

- Slip and Fall
- Electrocutions
- Scalding
- Drowning
- Poisoning
- Mold

Writing a checklist and making a visual inspection of the bathroom will help consumers discuss their needs with a contractor or store salesperson when shopping for bathroom items.

**Finding Expert Help** Working with a remodeler or store that specializes in baths, such as Sacramento's USA Bath California Remodeling, a bathroom design consulting and products store headquartered in Sacramento, gives consumers access to qualified experts who can properly install safety items.

For example, a consumer can buy an inexpensive grab bar from a big box store, but if the homeowner doesn't install it properly, it can pull loose from the wall when someone grabs it leading to a serious injury. Providers like USA Bath also have design consultants who can marry utility with the right style for a person's home.

**Different Ages, Different Problems**

Homeowners should consider who will be using bathrooms. Children might wander in alone unsupervised. Seniors often have special needs using a toilet, tub or shower. A bath expert can help homeowners understand options such as barrier free shower systems, walk-in tubs and shower seating.

**Slip and Fall** To reduce slips and falls, homeowners should look at the flooring, seating, walls, shower and tub. Throw rugs on tile or wood floors should have a nonskid backing. Showers and tubs should have nonslip surfaces, such as rubber mats or stickers applied to the bottom of the tub or shower. Grab bars help people get in and out of a shower or tub or on and off a toilet. Elevated toilets make it easier for a senior or someone with a disability.

**Electrocutions** It's common to place a hair dryer, curling iron, electric razor or other electrical item on the edge of a sink after use. This is especially dangerous if the item stays plugged in. Someone taking a bath, using the toilet or filling the sink might not pay attention to the item and knock it into water. Homeowners should make it easy for bathroom users to store electrical items or hang them on the wall. Cabinets, shelving or wall hangars can protect people and add a style element to a bathroom.

**Scalding** To prevent burns, homeowners should check water heaters and lower the temperature to no more than 120 Fahrenheit, recommends the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Children should learn to always turn on cold water first and then run hot water. They should know that it sometimes takes hot water several minutes to make it from a water heater to a faucet and to be patient when washing hands.

Working with a qualified bathroom expert, a homeowner can learn about anti-scald devices. "As people age, they can be less sensitive to temperature changes or less able to react quickly if water is suddenly too hot or too cold," points out Alan Hansen, owner of USA Bath. "We always use a temperature balanced valve, which helps prevent unexpected changes in the temperature of your shower water."

**Drowning** Children and pets can drown in just a few inches of water and die within minutes. Parents should never draw a bath and leave it to answer a phone or let it cool unless they can secure the door. Parents and babysitters should always keep children in a bathtub in sight.

**Poisoning** Many people keep medicines and cleaning agents in bathrooms. Children and pets that get into these can become seriously ill or die. Homeowners can add shelving to keep these items out of reach of children and add safety latches to cabinets and drawers. Adults

should also remember that children and pets root around in garbage cans.

**Mold** Because of the amount of steam present in a bathroom, mold is a common problem. Mold can trigger asthma attacks, allergies, rashes, runny nose and irritated eyes. "Mold forms when water is absorbed into porous areas of the bathroom like grout and caulk seals," explains Hansen. "USA Bath uses

a unique grout free installation method, designed to prevent the problems associated with mold and mildew formation around a bath or shower."

Bathroom experts can check home bathrooms for mold in places homeowners might not think, such as behind wallpaper, and inside vents, walls and ceilings. Installing a bathroom fan can help reduce steam that leads to excess moisture on walls.

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