

Steps to a Safe Bathroom

Nearly 200,000 people are injured annually in their bathroom, according to statistics from the National Safety Council. The most common accidents are slips, falls and scalding from hot water. Although not all accidents will ever be eliminated, the National Kitchen & Bath Association (NKBA) feels that a well-designed bathroom can also be a safe one.

The NKBA has developed a few simple guidelines for homeowners to follow to keep their bathroom safe.

- Ensure that slip resistant flooring is used in all areas of the bathroom. While most materials are slippery when wet; slip-resistant flooring materials help to eliminate many falls and reduce the risk. Any water on the floor should be wiped up as soon as possible to maintain safety.
- Eliminate steps leading into tub or shower areas. Try to surround a tub with a platform where you can sit down prior to entering or exiting the tub.
- Select shower doors carefully. Always use shatterproof glass in shower enclosures. Also, if the door is hinged, have it open into the room instead of into the shower. In the case of an emergency, this allows easy access into and out of the shower.
- Install proper faucets. The NKBA recommends pressure-balanced and temperature-controlled valves in the bath and shower to prevent scalding. Also, install faucets in areas that are easily accessible from outside the tub or shower. Avoid having to stretch or reach for the water control.
- Add benches and grab bars. Installing them within shower enclosures and near the entrance of tub greatly decreases the chance of accidental falls.
- Put in emergency shut-offs for whirlpool tubs. Make sure that the shut-off can be reached from both inside and outside the tub area to ensure maximum safety.
- Maintain safe distances between water sources and electrical switches. Use ground-fault circuit interrupters on electrical receptacles. They shut off when a hazard, such as moisture, is sensed.
- Use cabinet locks. The bathroom holds many poisonous household products and prescriptions. Always place locks on cabinets where these substances are stored.