

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2019

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[ACTIVE HOME]

Ageless BATHROOMS

Easy access design elements

BY REBECCA HAY

No matter your age, safety in the bathroom is paramount. Many of our clients are redesigning their homes, not only for themselves, but also for their young grandchildren. Now, more than ever, it's easy to add additional safety features that are not only functional, but are great looking.

Slip-resistant flooring

Slips and falls are the most common accidents in the home. Tub surfaces can be especially slippery, so consider adding slip-resistant strips.

When installing tiles, the grout lines actually reduce the slippage rate. If replacing your bathroom floor, or tiling a shower, consider anti-slip mosaic tiles with grout lines that are no more than two inches apart. If you prefer the look of large-format tiles, look for textured porcelain with a honed finish.

Stylish support

Regardless of your age or physical ability, grab bars are not only functional, but they can be decorative. Having a grab bar by the toilet and in the shower provides extra security. They can also double as towel bars. Sleek options are now available from a wide range of companies in various colours and finishes that match faucets and shower fixtures. Textured finishes prevent your hand from slipping when holding on.

Consider adding grab bars in the bathtub and shower areas. Also, lower the height of valve controls and handheld shower heads. When selecting a tub, choose one that's low profile, so that it's easy to get in and out of.



Curb-less showers

This has become a popular trend. Not only do curb-less showers look sleek, but they also help to reduce the risk of tripping when entering and exiting. If you're not a bather, consider removing the tub altogether and replacing it with a large shower that includes handheld sprays and a bench seat. If you're going this route, make sure that your contractor knows how to grade the floor and where to place the drain.

Commode considerations

If you have arthritic knees or other limitations, standing up from a low toilet can be excruciating. A standard bowl height is 15 inches off the ground. Today's 'comfort height' toilets feature bowls that are 17 to 19 inches high. The higher bowl is not only good for knees and backs, but also for taller people and those with mobility issues.

Further tushy comfort can be found on 'intelligent toilets'. These smart privies come with seat warmers, and also have built-in cleansing sprays and warm air dryers to assist with personal hygiene. Some brands offer a night light feature, as well.

Seat-ability

Falling is often a concern when in the shower. And, for some, standing can be very tiresome. A shower seat is a great addition, along with an accessible hand-held shower. If you're tight for space, fold-down shower seats can be stored when not in use. When sitting, it's easier to shave and bathe, and it's far more relaxing.

Single handle, or touch-activated, faucets are ideal for those who have difficulty turning knobs. The same concept holds true for doors – lever handles are much easier to operate.

When outfitting your bathroom, there's no need to compromise on beauty – or safety. ■

Rebecca Hay is well-recognized for her professional design work, and has appeared on HGTV. rebeccahaydesigns.com



When extra support is required, install hand grips and grab bars.