

AS SEEN IN GOOD HOUSEKEEPING

# The Bathroom

It's usually the smallest room in the house, yet with its slippery surfaces and presence of water, medications, and electrical appliances, the bathroom is filled with a surprising number of potential hazards. A watchful eye and a few basic precautions will help you reduce the risk.

## **HOT WATER BURNS** The overlooked danger

Believe it or not, hot water or steam can burn the skin like fire. Liquid at 140°F can burn the skin in as little as 5 seconds—or 1 second for a young child. Shelly McCammon, an Atlanta-based graphic designer, found this out in a most terrible way a few years ago when her infant daughter Leah accidentally turned on a bathtub faucet and was scalded by excessively hot water. Even with immediate medical attention, Leah's injuries were so severe that she died just days before her first birthday.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, nearly 3,800 injuries and over 30 deaths occur in the home each year due to hot water burns. Take these safety measures to keep water at a safe temperature:

- Know how hot your tap water is. Test the temperature with a bath or candy thermometer.
- Lower the temperature of your hot water heater, ideally to 120°F, or just below the medium setting.
- For bathing, turn the cold water on first, then mix in warmer water until the temperature reaches around 100°F. Note that the suggested water temperature for babies is lower due to their thinner skins.
- Before placing your child in the tub, put your whole hand in the water and move it around the tub to check for hot spots.

To help prevent scald burns, you can also install an anti-scald device. The device quickly reduces the flow of water to a trickle when hot tap water reaches an unsafe temperature. A simple replacement device for existing tub spouts, hand showers, and showerheads is currently available. It is called H2otStop and was designed by American Valve in memory of Leah McCammon. Learn more at [www.h2otstop.com](http://www.h2otstop.com).

## **LOCK IT UP** Bathrooms contain an array of risky substances—often within reach of curious children. Moreover, it's too easy for older adults to mistake one bottle for another:

- Lock away medications, cleaning products, electrical appliances, and other dangerous items in a place where children can't touch them.
- Read labels carefully on products and medications. Follow all safety directions.
- Use child-resistant lids on all prescription and over-the-counter medications and supplements.

For more home safety tips, visit [www.MySafeHome.org](http://www.MySafeHome.org).



## **STAY IN REACH** For young children, even a few inches of water in a bathtub can pose a drowning hazard. Don't let kids out of your sight:

- Always stay within arm's reach when children are bathing. Never allow older children to supervise younger kids.
- Always help young children use the sink or tub.
- If you have toddlers, use toilet seat locks and doorknob covers. Always keep bathroom doors closed.

## **KEEP A GRIP** Everyone, especially older adults, needs sturdy support on the ground and within arm's reach to prevent falls in the bathroom:

- Install secure grab bars in bathtubs and showers, and near toilets. New models are attractive and easy to install.
- Use a non-slip mat or adhesive safety strips inside the bath or shower.
- Use bathmats to catch drips, and always wipe up spills immediately.

### **TIP**

Towel racks or wall-mounted soap dishes should not be used as grab bars—they are not strong enough to support you if you slip.