



## Consumer Factsheet

# Showering over the bathroom floor drain

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The purpose of this factsheet is to assist people to make decisions about how they safely manage water in their bathroom. Bathrooms are used for a range of activities, such as showering, bathing, and rinsing items. Some have toilets and even laundry facilities.

Most bathrooms are designed to manage water in a way that keeps the structural and electrical parts of the room dry, safe, and in good condition. There are special requirements for shower areas, as this is where most water is used.

For reasons such as poor health, impaired mobility, or home renovation, you may be unable to use the shower area. In this case you might consider showering over the bathroom or laundry floor drain. Sometimes you might want to wash pets or rinse items over this floor drain as well. This factsheet will help you to decide whether this is a safe option for you and your home.

## Waterproofing in the bathroom

Tiles and grout do not provide a waterproof surface. The wall and floor underneath need a waterproofing process prior to the tiles being laid. The Building Code of Australia (BCA) and Australian Standard AS 3740-2010 outline the **minimum** waterproofing requirements in residential bathrooms and laundries. These requirements are most strict for the wet areas:

- the floor of the shower area, including any shower hob or recess
- the walls and floor around a bathtub or shower area
- the joins in the walls, and between the walls and floor of a wet area
- where plumbing, including drains, taps, and water outlets, go through the wall or floor
- where fixtures, such as shelves and grab rails, are fastened through the wall of a wet area.

However, older bathrooms and laundries might not meet these modern requirements.

Showering or rinsing items on the bathroom floor, outside the bathtub or shower area, may cause water to seep through the grout and under the tiles. Without adequate waterproofing, this can damage and rot porous materials, such as timber, under the floor. A range of load bearing or structural elements in the floor might be affected. These include the doorframe, the studs in the walls, and the joists and bearers in the floor. On a concrete floor slab, the water can travel along the slab to the wall studs or under the tiles to an adjoining room.

The shower floor area generally slopes so that water runs into the shower drain. In some bathrooms, the bathroom floor also slightly slopes to a floor drain. However, if a bathroom floor does not have enough slope to this drain, water can pool on the floor and run out of the doorway to adjacent passages or rooms. If this continues to occur it can damage floor coverings and floor sub-surfaces.

## **Where does the water go?**

When you use the basin, bathtub, or shower area, the water (also called grey water) going down the drain is taken out through the connected sewer pipe or other pipes designed for this purpose. A drain in the bathroom floor is not for everyday use. It is only meant to prevent flooding if a basin, bathtub, or shower area overflows. The drainage hole in the floor might not be connected to the sewer pipe, and instead, water just discharges under the house. This can cause mould, odours, and damage to the foundations.

## **Electricity in the bathroom**

A bathroom needs to be safe for people to use. Water contacting electrical devices is extremely dangerous and potentially life threatening. The Building Code of Australia (BCA) and Australian Standards (AS/NZS 3000:2007) have rules about how close electrical power outlets, switches and appliances can be to a water outlet. If you use a hand-held shower outside the shower area in the bathroom, you need to take extra care not to spray water near electrical devices. Electrical power outlets and switches, and any electrical appliances, must be in a safe location and protected from water spray. You should also have a 'safety switch' (called a Residual Current Device [RCD]) installed. It is important to seek the advice of a licensed electrician.

More information is provided in the HMinfo [Summary Bulletin: Electrical Safety in Bathrooms](#). It is available on the [www.homemods.info](http://www.homemods.info) website.

## Alternatives

Are you, or someone you care for, unable to use the shower area? You might not need to shower over the bathroom floor drain. An Occupational Therapist can help you find a safe alternative.

There are also alternatives to using the bathroom floor to wash pets or rinse off items. The bathtub could be used with a strainer over the drainage hole to catch any debris. The outdoor hose could also be used, either on the grass or near an outdoor drain.

## Where can I find more information?

- Home Modification & Maintenance service providers.
- Occupational Therapists.
- Architects or builders.
- Resource library on the HMinfo website at [www.homemods.info](http://www.homemods.info)

*\*\*This information was correct at time of printing.*