

# Bathroom sanctuary

## How to turn your bathroom into a safe sanctuary

Bathrooms are no longer simply functional washrooms, they are now seen as a showcase for a home or a relaxing sanctuary from busy family life. They are getting bigger and better, with separate showers, oversized tubs, sauna rooms and even televisions.

Remember that water and electricity are a dangerous mix, so it's best to leave electrical work to the professionals. Leading electrical regulatory body, NICEIC offers some practical advice to ensure your bathroom can be both gorgeous and safe.



## Water and electricity don't mix!

Homeowners should only carry out electrical work if competent to do so, and if they can inspect and test that it is safe for use. Rules for carrying out work in the bathroom were tightened in 2005 to prevent the number of accidents caused by faulty DIY electrical work. To comply with the law homeowners must now notify their local building control office before they begin any work and pay the appropriate fee to have it inspected.

The simplest way to ensure any electrical work is carried out safely and to a high standard is to use a government-registered electrician, such as one registered with NICEIC. They will notify building control on your behalf and issue you with a building regulations compliance certificate, to prove it meets the required safety standards.

## Good planning saves money

Good planning will make sure you make best use of space and also get jobs done in the right order. Start with the basics: Necessities include sink, toilet, bath and shower, and you'll save money if you can use the existing plumbing. Bathrooms are not usually the largest rooms in the house, so think carefully about the amount of space you have when considering the 'nice to haves' such as multiple sinks with individual lighting, under floor heating or fitted furniture to increase storage space.

## Keep it light!

Lighting needs to be functional, but can also be adaptable for mood setting. For make-up application and shaving it's best to have a bright light, but if relaxing for a soak in the tub you'll want to be sure you can dim the lights. Wall lights look better if they are hard wired into the wall with tiles laid over the top. If you're not planning on changing the tiles you will have to enclose any cables in trunking.

Enclosed ceiling lights such as spotlights are preferable to pendant light fittings and all other wall lights must be out of reach, or enclosed to keep water out. If spotlights are being installed above a shower or bath then they must be enclosed, and all spotlights must be fitted properly with a fire hood or be flame safe for protection against heat and to prevent the spread of fire. They should be controlled by a ceiling mounted pull-cord switch, where the cord is made of insulating material, or a wall switch, which must be mounted outside the bathroom.



## Keep it safe

Electrical sockets are now permitted in bathrooms or shower rooms as long as they are located more than 3m from the edge of the bath or shower. Specially designed shaver units are an exception to this rule and can be located slightly nearer, but still no closer than 600mm from the bath or shower.

All circuits in a bathroom must be protected by an RCD (residual current device).



## Showers

Electric showers can provide instantaneous showering day and night for the whole family. They draw water directly from a cold water supply and heat it as it is used, so you don't need to have a stored hot water supply. Because they are easy to install virtually every home can have one.

Electric showers require their own electrical circuit, which in general will have the highest electrical demand out of your household appliances. They will need to be connected to the fuse box and protected by an RCD. The cost of fitting an electric shower will depend on whether the fuse box requires updating to comply with current safety standards. Building regulations require an adequate means of ventilation. An extractor fan is essential and will help cut down steam in the bathroom.

## Keeping warm

Underfloor heating will help you stay warm when you step out of the shower on a chilly morning. It requires sub-floors to be laid, made up of 20mm of chipboard or plywood to provide an even level and insulation, and then the heating is laid with a screed over the top. If you're not having floor tiles and choose lino or carpet instead you will need thicker screed before laying the final floor finish, this will allow for the build up and even spread of heat. A wall-mounted thermostat will need to be positioned where water can't splash and will generally be linked to a heat-sensing probe situated within the floor. It's best to choose a thermostat with a timer, so you can set when the heating comes on. This type of system requires RCD protection.

All electric heaters and water heaters in a bathroom must be fixed and permanently wired into the wall. Hot water central heating or underfloor heating is the safest way of keeping a bathroom warm, but if you do have an electric room heater it must be out of the reach of someone in the bath or shower – fixed at a greater distance than 0.6m. Electric heaters should be controlled by a pull-cord inside the bathroom or by a switch located outside.



## Bathroom luxuries

If you have extra budget and want to turn your bathroom into your personal spa or television zone, there's always a way, but just make sure that all electrics are fitted safely.

## Splashing out on a whirlpool tub

Do you dream of a whirlpool tub? Increasing numbers of homeowners are turning luxury into a reality by installing spa baths. Pumps are fitted underneath the bath and an isolator switch must be located outside the bathroom to turn off the mains power and be RCD protected.

## Bath time television?

Having a waterproof TV in the bathroom can help you relax whilst watching your favourite programme or movie. You can even install TVs that double up as mirrors when switched off. By law all TVs have to be fitted into a wall cavity and the area around the screen siliconed to prevent water getting in. You'll need a depth of 75mm to 85mm so that the screen sits flush with the wall. To prevent the screen steaming up the TV glass is heated. You'll also need speakers, which like the TV must be hardwired into the wall or ceiling.



## Where to find a reliable electrician?

NICEIC maintains a list of around 24,000 approved electrical contractors and domestic installers. Find one in your area by calling **0870 013 0382** or visit **[www.findanelectrician.info](http://www.findanelectrician.info)**

For extra peace of mind, all work carried out by NICEIC Domestic Installers is covered by an automatic warranty, which lasts for a period of six years from the date of completion, and provides added protection for homeowners.

