

The Bathroom Care Manual

The life of bathroom surfaces, whether they are new or re-enamelled can be extended by many years if specific care is taken during cleaning and maintenance.

The care taken in cleaning these surfaces will keep them looking new and shiny for many years.

Recommended Cleaning Procedures

The best time to clean your bathroom surfaces is immediately after use while the dirt is still soft.

Only use a sponge or soft cloth for cleaning. This in combination with a soft liquid (non-abrasive) soap or detergent, are all that is needed to get most sanitary ware items 100% clean. Rinse the surface well with clean water and finish the cleaning process off by making sure the surface is completely dry.

An effective way to remove the build up of body oils combined with soap and shampoo (appears as yellow staining) on a bath, shower base or wall tiles, is to use a non-abrasive detergent on a soft cloth to clean the surface.

Use the same technique to clean tiles, shower screens, basins, exterior of toilets, toilet cisterns even chrome or gold plated tap ware and outlets.

If you use a bath mat, always remove immediately after use. Never let it remain in the bath as it will damage the enamel. Do not hang the bath mat (or wet towels) over the bath to dry.

Incorrect Cleaning Procedures

The greatest area of abuse occurs in the cleaning process.

Never use steel wool, abrasive pads or applicators on a re-enamelled area. These will cause immediate damage to most bathroom surfaces.

Never use abrasive substances. It is very tempting to try and remove marks with these substances but greater damage is always the end result. The most important substances to avoid are abrasive powders and crèmes.

Considerable damage can also be done by using acids or other chemical substances such as drain cleaners.

Of these chlorine, pool acid, bleach, vinegar, toilet cleaner and lemon juice must strictly be avoided. Most of these substances will remove stains but the surface glaze layer will also be permanently damaged in the process.

The damage that these products do can be described as follows. They clean the surface by "scratch" cleaning the dirt off. This leaves tiny scratches on the surface, which gets filled up with dirt. So you scrub harder to clean them off, creating more scratch marks.

Each time you clean it will become harder to clean satisfactorily. This cycle eventually leads to a complete breakdown of the surface.

Other Problems That Will Affect Your Sanitary Ware Fittings

Water Quality

In some areas, domestic water contains an unacceptably high proportion of "foreign objects" which in time may either stain or scratch most surfaces.

Contaminants such as vegetable colloids and iron oxide will stain the surface. Even new bathroom surfaces are often stained as well. In areas where the water contains a lot of lime, sediment often builds up around the waste, below the taps, etc. It is important to ensure that dripping taps are attended to and not to allow water to remain on bathroom surfaces.

Dripping Taps

Damage caused by dripping taps over a period of time causes considerable damage to a bathroom's surface.

Not only does it waste water, but it eventually breaks down the surface of the bath or basin. We have seen many baths and basins worn right through the enamel below the dripping taps.

The first sign of damage is the staining of the enamel surface. This stain is usually green or faint brown.

Often dripping taps eventually cause rust around an outlet. If the bath or basin is re-enamelled and the taps continue to leak, rust will re-occur.

Chipping

Most bathroom surfaces are susceptible to chipping. Below are a few causes:

- Damage during installation
- Heavy metal plugs
- Hand showers
- Loose tap handles
- Things dropping off shelves or window sills above a bath or basin.
- Children's hard bath toys (e.g. metal cars)

It is important to attend to damage as soon as possible to prevent further deterioration.

Please note that damage caused by chipping is not covered by APEX Resurfacing's guarantee. APEX Resurfacing offers a chip repair services which includes colour matching the area as well.

Call APEX Resurfacing for more information about this service.

Water Temperature

Extremely hot water causes any surface to expand and contract. Sudden changes in temperature can cause cracks and other damage. It is advisable to periodically check the temperature of the hot water. A temperature not exceeding 65 degrees centigrade is recommended.

Always turn on the cold water tap first and slowly turn on the hot water tap to gradually increase the temperature of the water. This is an important procedure to follow especially if you have a polymarble basin top as it helps to prevent crazing in these surfaces which is caused by sudden changes in temperature.

Initial Installation

Poor installation of bathroom fittings can lead to water pooling on bathroom surfaces.

Water left to stand on bare enamel surfaces for a long period of time will eventually cause damage. This is often the same damage caused by a dripping tap. With the level of chemicals put into our water supply today, it would only add to this concern.

Another reason for rust appearing around the outlet is water unable to drain away and just sitting there. Correct installation of acrylic and fiberglass bathtubs is critical as severe flexing may result in the bathtub cracking.

Non Slip Strips or Mats

It is unhygienic to leave bath mats in the bath or shower. Always remove the mat after use.

Mats left to sit are great places for water to get captured and just sit there for long periods of time where their suction cups harbor bacteria, mould and mildew. Water left to stand on re-enamelled areas for a long period of time will eventually cause damage. Stick on non-slip strips can cause problems when the edges start to lift off, and depending on the method of removal, can damage the surface. Once the edges have lifted, they are also unhygienic.

Cigarette Burns

Cigarettes can seriously damage many types of baths, basins and bench tops, especially acrylic and fiberglass surfaces. Although most surfaces can be repaired economically, some damage is costly. Vitreous enamel surfaces are not easily damaged by cigarette burns.

Plumbing Draining

Poorly installed wastes can lead to water lying around the waste and not draining properly. Water left to sit there will eventually lead to corrosion.

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In acrylic and fiberglass baths, the effect of water will often stain the surface therefore requiring severe cleaning methods which often remove the shine and can damage the surface.

Soaking of Washing

The dyes and residues form clothing left to soak in a bathtub or basin can stain the surface. This can be difficult to remove and with acrylic and fiberglass baths can lead to the stains impregnating the surface. Strong detergents in washing powders will eventually cause damage.

Soaking washing in washing powder will eventually cause damage. Soaking washing in a bath or basin will eventually stain and discolour the surface.

Hair Dyes

Hair dyes contain very powerful chemicals which will stain most bathroom surfaces. It is advisable not to use hair dyes in any bathtub but rather in porcelain hand basins which are far more chemical and stain resistant.

Nail Varnish

Nail varnish often leaves marks on bathroom surfaces. Nail varnish remover contains solvents which may cause damage to some fiberglass and acrylic baths.

Soap

Many soaps contain caustic soda which, in time, bleach many enamel pigments. Soap should not be allowed to stand on a bare enamel surface for a protracted period of time. This use of soap rests or soap dishes is strongly recommended.

Other Reasons

The frequent use of deeply coloured substances such as bubble baths and bath oils could also permanently discolour most surfaces. The constant use of coloured disinfectants and soaps can result in a stained residue build up on bathroom surfaces which can only be removed with a specialized polishing process. In some cases the stain penetrates the surface and cannot be removed.

Unavoidable Causes

There are a few unavoidable causes for bathroom surface deterioration.

The most common of these is the supply of discoloured water which often leaves a yellowish brown stain. Unfortunately, bathroom surfaces in these areas will show rapid sign of staining and discolouring, especially below dripping taps.

A second unavoidable factor is the effect of a cast iron or mild steel hot water system. These systems also tend to produce discoloured water which eventually stains the bathroom surfaces.