

BATHROOMS: EASY-CLEAN SPACES

IT'S NO GOOD HAVING A BEAUTIFUL BATHROOM IF IT'S A PAIN TO KEEP SPOTLESS. WHETHER DESIGNING FROM SCRATCH OR DOING WEEKEND DIY, HERE'S HOW TO CREATE A ROOM THAT CLEANS LIKE A BREEZE

Words *VANESSA KEYS*

Of all the rooms in your home, the bathroom gets filthy the fastest. The constant exposure to moisture and steam, leaky lotions, loose locks and splashes means you may feel like you spend more time cleaning the bathroom than enjoying it. "An easy-clean bathroom is essential for having a home that enhances your lifestyle, not detracts from it," says Coco Tully, interior designer for Cote Interiors. "It's not all aesthetics either: bathrooms that are difficult to clean often grow fungi like mould and mildew, which can be detrimental to our health." A good bathroom layout, well-considered surfaces and smart storage – as in this design by KWD – will work wonders to cut your cleaning time, plus save you money by reducing the number of cleaning products you'll need.



ALL IN THE VANITY

As the central place of storage in the bathroom, your vanity plays a vital role in keeping your space clean, which this design by Fiona Austin of Austin Design Associates proves here. "A wall-hung vanity with plenty of storage means you can keep your everyday items stowed and surfaces decluttered, plus it makes the floor below accessible and easy to mop," says interior designer Coco. Ensuring your vanity is easy to clean extends to the sink and tapware. "Choose a vanity with an integrated basin to reduce gaps where dirt and grime can collect, and opt for wall-mounted tapware, which stops water dripping onto the surface of the tap," says Franco Parisi, chief operating officer of Parisi. "Try and avoid tapware with intricate ridging, as this creates areas where grime and dirt can build up," he adds. >

PHOTOGRAPHY (THIS PAGE) DEREK SWALLOW (OPPOSITE) BRENT LUKEY



EASY-CLEAN COLOURS

When choosing hues for your bathroom, consider the surfaces you're working with. "On the floor, always use a tile with movement or pattern, as this will divert the eye from focusing on dirt or dust," says interior designer Coco Tully of this trick, seen at left. Coco recommends continuing this tile on the lower half of the wall for easy cleaning, if possible. "Just make sure you choose a grout that's slightly darker than the tile itself, as the grout will be the first thing that discolours," she says. For non-tiled walls, opt for light, airy hues such as whites, light browns and taupes, light greens and soft greys - they visually make the space feel fresh and clean, plus help small spaces feel larger. "Look for a stain-resistant bathroom paint that's specifically designed for wet areas and comes with a built-in mould-inhibitor," says Romy Nayagam, Dulux brand manager.



SHOWER POWER

Interior designer Coco recommends three key elements when creating an easy-clean shower. "Choose larger format tiles to reduce grout lines, a frameless shower screen and a handheld shower," she says. A handheld shower, such as the one above, means you can easily hose down surfaces without having to handle a heavy bucket, while a frameless screen makes for less grooves to clean. The door mechanism also matters, advises Franco Parisi. "Go for sliding glass shower doors rather than doors that open out," he says. "This will help prevent water dripping from the glass onto the floor." It's also important to choose a shower head that resists mineral build-up. "Look for a silicone spray face that resists corrosion and is easy to wipe clean," says Dee from Kohler.

ROYAL FLUSH

If cleaning the toilet is the chore you dread the most, here's some great news: today's toilets now come with so many squeaky-clean features that you might never have to scrub again. "Definitely look for a rimless design - there's nowhere for germs to hide - plus anti-stain technology," says Dee Hunter, senior product marketing manager for Kohler. "Touchless flushing is also important - the flush button is the highest contagion point, so a touchless toilet significantly reduces the spread of bacteria." And don't stop there: choose a concealed cistern so that the toilet can be wall-hung - as GIA Renovations did in the bathroom below - making it far easier to clean underneath and behind.



QUICK CLEAN WINS

On a budget or want to DIY this weekend? "The most effective thing you can do is seal your grout," says interior designer Coco. "Adding sealant to your existing grout will make it moisture resistant, as well as prevent build-up of bacteria, mould and mildew." You could also try switching up your cleaning products. "Try using a non-soap or detergent cleaner," says Christie Wood, design specialist for Beaumont Tiles. "This will help avoid the thin invisible layer that soap-based cleaners attract, which collects unnecessary dirt and grime in your bathroom." >

"SELECT YOUR *colours* CAREFULLY TO CREATE A SPACE THAT FEELS ULTRA-CLEAN EVEN WHEN IT IS NOT. FLOOR *tiles* WITH COLOUR VARIATION HELP TO HIDE DIRT AND DUST"

~ COCO TULLY, INTERIOR DESIGNER



PHOTOGRAPHY (THIS PAGE) SIMON WHITBREAD (OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) ANNETTE O'BRIEN, EMILY BARTLETT/GIA RENOVATIONS X2



MAKE A SPLASH

Tossing up between a freestanding or inset bath? The decision will most likely come down to space, says interior designer Coco Tully, and the ability to clean that soaking spot. “For bathrooms with ample space, freestanding is actually best, as inset baths come with more corners, edges, grout and sealant lines that are harder to clean,” she says. “But for a freestanding tub to work, you’ll need to be able to easily reach between the sides of your bath and the adjacent walls.” For smaller spaces, such as in the layout at left by Fiona Austin from Austin Design Associates, Coco suggests a back-to-wall or back-to-corner freestanding bath – these can also reduce tile and grout lines. Material matters too. “Look for a bath made from Lithocast cast resin, which has a high-gloss finish that’s easy to keep clean,” says Dee Hunter from Kohler.



EXPERT TIP: EPOXY GROUT

If tricky grout is getting you down, try epoxy grout, suggests interior designer Coco. “It’s an incredible alternative to regular grout as it’s completely water-resistant, doesn’t stain or discolour, and is super-easy to clean,” she says of the look, pictured right. “I always combine it with natural stone tiles because epoxy grout doesn’t need rough cleaning and potent chemicals that can be damaging to stones like marble.”



1. ‘Elli’ freestanding bath 1700, \$1995, Parisi. 2. ‘Potts Point’ 600mm x 600mm tile in Carrara, \$59/sqm, Tile Cloud. 3. ‘Majorca Chariot’ 200mm x 200mm tile, \$76.70/sqm, Beaumont Tiles. 4. ‘Cameo’ mirror in Brushed Brass with anti-fog technology, \$1695, Parisi. 5. ‘Le Lacche’ 61mm x 370mm wall tile in Tobacco, \$94.53/sqm, Beaumont Tiles.

PHOTOGRAPHY (THIS PAGE, FROM TOP LEFT) DEREK SWALWELL/AUSTIN DESIGN ASSOCIATES. ELOUISE VAN RIET-GRAT (OPPOSITE) ARMELLE HABIB/AUSTIN DESIGN ASSOCIATES



TILE TALK

Tiles are revered by bathroom designers for their easy-to-clean properties but some are easier to maintain than others. “My pick is glazed porcelain or glazed ceramic floor tiles,” says Christie from Beaumont. “Unlike polished porcelain or natural stone tiles, they have no open pores, which means little to no chance of staining or small places for bacteria to hide.” The size of your tile also makes a difference when cleaning. The bigger the tiles – as specified by Fiona Austin for this bathroom design – the less grout you’ll need between them. “Avoid mosaic or irregular tiles with loads of grout lines in large areas,” says Coco Tully. “If you love this look, use as accents inside a recessed shower niche or above your vanity. A little can go a long way.”

“KEEP THE AIR CLEAN WITH THE SIMPLE ADDITION OF A *plant* – IT WILL ADD SOFTNESS WHILE HELPING FILTER THE AIR YOU BREATHE”

~ DEE HUNTER, SENIOR PRODUCT MARKETING MANAGER, KOHLER