



Help with bathing and showering

*How we can help you and
how you can help yourself*



DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL

Social Services - local offices

20 St George's Road
BARNSTAPLE EX32 7AU
Tel. 01271 388010

Abbotsham Road
BIDEFORD EX39 3AF
Tel. 01237 475693

Market Street
CREDITON EX17 2AJ
Tel. 0845 1110640

St Edmund's Court
16 Okehampton Street
EXETER EX4 1DU
Tel. 01392 384444

Town Hall
St Andrew's Road
EXMOUTH EX8 1AW
Tel. 01392 385700

St Michaels
Orchard Way
HONITON EX14 1HU
Tel. 01392 385800

Coombe Royal
Stentiford Hill
KINGSBRIDGE TQ7 4AD
Tel. 01752 891050

Teign House
Kingsteignton Road
NEWTON ABBOT TQ 12 2QG
Tel. 01392 384900

Jacobspool House
11 West Street
OKEHAMPTON EX20 1LJ
Tel' 01837 54864

Abbey Rise
Whitchurch Road
TAVISTOCK PL19 9AS
Tel. 01822 614121

Phoenix Lane
TIVERTON EX16 6LB
Tel. 0845 1110640

This leaflet offers advice, information and some practical solutions to problems with bathing and showering.

Bathing

- ◆ Safety must always be your first consideration. Would it be better to bath only when someone else is in the house and could help if you got into difficulty?
- ◆ Don't forget to leave the bathroom door **unlocked**.
- ◆ Bathing can be dangerous for anyone but the risk increases with disability and age. Listen to advice from your doctor or health worker.
- ◆ If in doubt, do not attempt to use the bath - you may not be able to get out when you are hot, wet and slippery.
- ◆ Do you suffer from fainting, giddiness or other medical condition? Bathing may not be the safest way to keep clean. A warm, damp, airless bathroom can make you feel faint.
- ◆ If you keep yourself clean by regularly 'strip washing' this may be the simplest, safest way to continue.

Showering

- ◆ If you have a shower as well as a bath, would it be easier to use the shower? It is possible to obtain seating even with an over-bath shower fixture.

Problem areas and simple solutions

Slippery surfaces - do you use a non-slip mat?

These are available from chemists and larger supermarkets. The rubber suction feet need to be checked regularly.

Stepping over the side of the bath. Would a grab rail at the side of the bath help you get in and out?

Towel rails, wash hand basins and taps may not take your weight if you lean on them. A relative or builder may be able to fit a plastic grab rail for you.

Fitting grab rails

Carefully, try getting in and out of the bath, placing your hand where the most suitable place for a grab rail would be. Grab rails should be made of plastic and may be mounted vertically or horizontally, although frequently a grab rail mounted at a 45 degree angle may be most useful.

Grab rails must be secure. Plasterboard walls will not bear much load so it is important to secure the rail into the wooden uprights behind the plaster. You may need specialist advice.

Would a tap rail help?

Tap rails can be secured to bath taps but **do not fit onto mixer taps**. They are sometimes useful for steadying yourself when getting in and out of the bath. You should **NOT** use them to raise yourself from the bottom of, or to pull yourself out of, the bath, as shown in some catalogues. Make sure they are fitted securely and do not slip.

Would a small seat at the bottom of the bath help you get in and out?

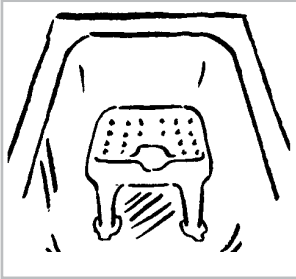
A bath seat placed in the bottom of the bath may help you get up and down more easily. Different heights of bath seat are available. A lower one will allow you to be more immersed in the water but you may find it more difficult to get on and off it.

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A non-slip mat will also be a great help on slippery surfaces, as will a grab rail on the wall to help you steady yourself.

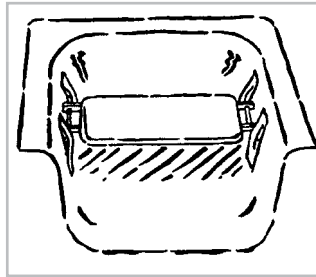
Sometimes a bath seat is used in conjunction with a bath board.

Fitting a bath seat: The seat must fit securely at the bottom of the bath. Check what your bath is made of - some types of bath seat will damage plastic or acrylic baths. Ask for advice when purchasing.



This type of bath seat with rubber suckers at the bottom is suitable for plastic and acrylic baths

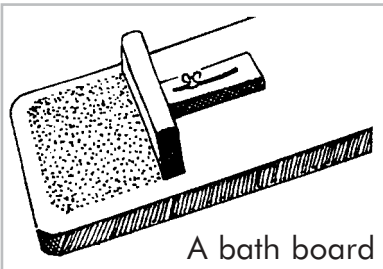
The suckers must grip the bottom of the bath securely. A non-slip rubber mat should go in front of the suckers.



This type of bath seat expands widthways to fit securely in the bath and is only suitable for strong metal baths.

Would a board at the end of the bath help you get onto the bath seat or be useful for sitting on while using an over-bath shower?

When choosing a bath-board make sure it will take your weight.



A bath board

You may also need a wall rail for support and safety and also a non-slip mat.

You may prefer a slatted plastic board especially if you intend to use the board with an over-bath shower.

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Fitting a bath board: It is not possible to fit a bath board to some makes of bath. Sometimes the ledge on the wall side of the bath is too narrow to support a bath board safely.

Measure the width of your bath. The bath board must not be too short nor so long that it overlaps the edge of the bath.

The bath board is usually fitted away from the tap end of the bath. Adjust the brackets on the underside of the bath board so that they grip the bath firmly. The bath board must not slip or slide.

You may find that after adjusting the underside brackets, it will only fit properly one way round. If so, it may be helpful to mark which way round it goes. The bath board may not fit a shaped bath that is contoured on the outside. It will only fit in places where the sides are straight.

Follow the manufacturers instructions, the brackets on the underside of the bath board should be adjusted so they fit the sides of the bath firmly.

Using a bath board

Sit yourself on the bath board with your feet outside the bath.



Using your hands to push down on the board and lifting your buttocks, slide or shuffle backwards over to the centre of the bath board. From this position lift your legs one at a time over the side of the bath. Some people need help to lift their legs over.

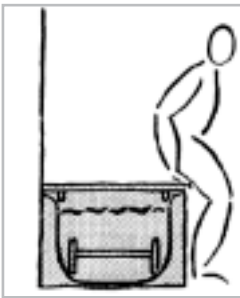
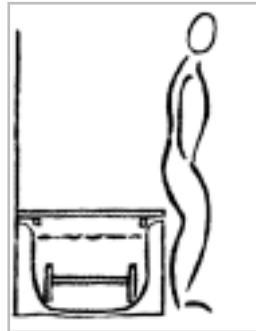
When seated on the board, you may be able to use an over-bath shower, have an all-over wash, or lower yourself onto a bath-seat.

Using a bath board with a bath seat

A bath seat placed below the waterline is usually used together with a bath board. To use it, lower yourself from the bath board on to the bath seat. Your decision about whether it is safe for you to use a bath-board must always be determined by your ability to **get out** of the bath safely. Your arms need to be reasonably strong.

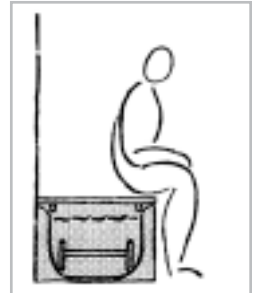
Getting into the bath using a bath board with a bath seat

Stand backwards by the edge of the bath, feeling the edge of the bath with the back of your legs.



Feel for the bath board with your hands.

Sit down squarely and firmly on the board, then slide backwards towards the centre of the board.



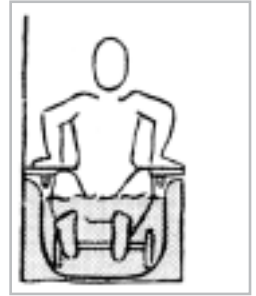
Swing round and lift your legs into the bath separately. You can remain on the board to shower.

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OR

Holding firmly onto the board, slowly lower your body onto the bath seat. Bend your knees if possible to help distribute your weight evenly. Sit squarely and firmly on the seat.

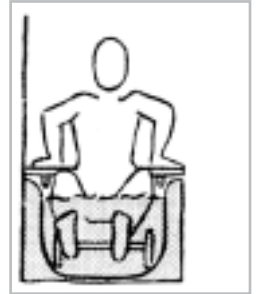
If possible fill the bath a little deeper and use a plastic jug for rinsing.



Getting out of the bath using a bath board and bath seat

If possible, drain the water first.

Hold on firmly to the bath board. Bend your knees if possible, then lift yourself so that you are sitting on the bath board.



Slide to the edge of the board then lift your legs out of the bath one at a time.

Seating and rails for the shower

Do you have a walk-in shower?

There are two types of seating that are freestanding, stools and wall mounted seats.

Freestanding stools may take up too much space in a cubicle and cannot be used on a weak shower base, the point loading on the legs can cause damage. Most modern acrylic bases are stone packed and very strong.

Wall mounted seats usually fold up against the wall and can be purchased with or without supporting legs. It is usually not advisable to fit them on

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plasterboard walls as they must be secure. If possible, do not fit the seat on the same wall as the shower to avoid turning around to reach the controls or banging your head. If you can, fit it on an adjacent wall.

You may need a grab rail to help you get up from the seat or to steady yourself when getting in and out of the shower. To find the best place for the rail, taking care, place your hand where you think you need the rail and ask someone to mark the wall. If this is on top of tiles use a piece of Sellotape to mark the position.

Bathing assessments - who do we help?

Social Services may offer you an assessment by an Occupational Therapist or other experienced person, to help identify the best solution for you and give you information and advice.

As the demand for services is greater than the money available to provide them, not everyone will be eligible to receive equipment or a service. **Your local helpdesk (listed at the front of this leaflet) will be able to provide a list of equipment suppliers.**

Or you can contact:

Independent Living Centre
14 Marsh Green Road
Marsh Barton
Exeter EX2 8PN Tel. 01392 687276

The Independent Living Centre offer free assessments at the centre, by appointment. There is a wide range of equipment to try out and after your assessment, simple items of bathing equipment can be purchased.

You can also contact:

Exeter Industrial Services
22 Marsh Green Road
Marsh Barton, Exeter EX2 8PN Tel. 01392 438329

Exeter Industrial Services supply appropriate bathing and other equipment, including minor adaptations to your home. Prices are available on request from the centre.

Private Care Agencies

Safety is a first consideration. For some people it may not be advisable to bath if there is nobody available to get help in an emergency.

You may choose to pay for a private care agency to help you in and out of the bath. You may pay for the services of private care staff who do other tasks around the home and will be at hand if you are in difficulty. A list of private agencies who can provide care in Devon is available from your local Social Services office. See the front inside cover of this leaflet.

Paying for help from private agencies

You may find you are entitled to Disability Living Allowance, or if you are over 65, to Attendance Allowance or other benefits. These will empower you, by enabling you to choose and buy social care services for yourself.

The freephone Benefits Advice Line 0800 882 200 has been set up specially for people with disabilities. If you are over 60, you can get a free benefits check by calling CAREdirect on freephone 0800 444 000.

Further information

Difficulty or inability to bath may be the only personal care difficulty you are experiencing. You may also find that your mobility has deteriorated, making other tasks difficult to manage. If so, please contact your local Social Services office for advice (listed on the front inside cover of this leaflet).

General Enquiries

Our headquarters at County Hall

Devon County Council Social Services Directorate

County Hall

Topsham Road

Exeter EX2 4QR

Tel. 01392 382331

Devon Social Services Localities and Primary Care Trust boundaries



Information from
Devon County Council
SOCIAL SERVICES



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Further copies from: Social Services General Office,
County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter EX2 4QR.
Tel. 01392 382946.

Other formats: For copies in other formats and languages,
please contact the Public Information & Communication Team,
Tel. 01392 382336 (address above).

Comments on this leaflet: Please contact the Head of
Public Information & Communication, Tel. 01392 382566
(address above). Email: pgiblin@devon.gov.uk

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