

OTTAWA BATHROOMS

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# Accessibility & Aging-in-Place

Walk-in showers, grab bars, comfort-height toilets,  
and barrier-free design

3 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

[ottawabathrooms.ca/construction-brain](https://ottawabathrooms.ca/construction-brain)

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## Q1

### What kind of shower handle is easiest for arthritis?

**Lever-style handles are the easiest shower controls for people with arthritis**, as they require minimal grip strength and can be operated with a closed fist, wrist, or even an elbow when necessary.

**Single-lever thermostatic mixing valves** are the gold standard for arthritis-friendly shower controls. These handles move in a simple arc motion rather than requiring twisting or gripping, and they maintain consistent water temperature automatically. The lever design allows you to use your whole hand or arm to operate the control, reducing stress on individual finger joints. Look for handles that are at least 4-6 inches long for maximum leverage.

**Pressure-balancing valves with large lever handles** are another excellent option, offering both ease of use and safety. These valves prevent sudden temperature changes if water pressure fluctuates elsewhere in the house. Many models feature a single lever that you pull out to turn on and rotate to adjust temperature, eliminating the need for separate hot and cold controls that require more dexterity.

In Ottawa's climate, where cold mornings can make arthritis symptoms worse, **thermostatic controls are particularly valuable** because they eliminate the need for fine temperature adjustments once set. The consistent water temperature means less manipulation of controls during use. For new installations, consider mounting the handle at a comfortable height - typically 38-42 inches from the floor - to reduce reaching and strain.

**Digital shower controls** are becoming more popular for accessibility, featuring large buttons or touch screens that require minimal pressure to operate. Some models even include voice activation or smartphone app control, though these tend to be more expensive options.

For your specific needs and bathroom layout, a consultation can help determine the best valve type and handle configuration. We often recommend testing different handle styles at a showroom before making final selections for accessibility renovations.

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## Q2

### What non-slip options are there besides grab bars?

**Non-slip flooring and surface treatments are essential safety features** that work alongside grab bars to create a comprehensive slip-resistant bathroom environment.

**Flooring options** provide the foundation for bathroom safety. Textured porcelain and ceramic tiles offer excellent slip resistance when properly selected - look for tiles with a coefficient of friction (COF) rating of 0.42 or higher for

wet areas. Natural stone tiles like slate or honed granite provide natural texture, though they require proper sealing. Luxury vinyl plank (LVP) designed for bathrooms combines water resistance with built-in texture, while rubber flooring offers maximum grip but may not suit all design preferences.

**In-shower solutions** are particularly important since this is where most bathroom slips occur. Textured shower floor tiles, including penny tiles with numerous grout lines, create natural traction. Anti-slip shower mats with suction cups provide removable protection, while permanent anti-slip strips or decals can be applied to existing smooth surfaces. For new installations, consider a curbless shower with a slight slope and textured floor throughout.

**Surface treatments** can enhance existing surfaces without full replacement. Anti-slip coatings can be professionally applied to existing tile or tub surfaces, though these typically need reapplication every few years. Textured bath mats both inside and outside the shower/tub area provide immediate slip protection.

In Ottawa's climate, proper ventilation becomes even more critical for safety, as humidity can make any surface more slippery. Consider heated floors to reduce condensation and improve comfort while maintaining slip resistance.

For a comprehensive bathroom safety assessment and non-slip flooring installation, Ottawa Bathrooms can evaluate your specific needs and recommend the best combination of solutions for your space and budget.

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Q3

## Can I get a grant to make my bathroom more accessible?

**Yes, there are several grant programs available to help Ottawa homeowners make accessibility improvements to their bathrooms.** The most significant funding comes from government programs designed to help seniors and people with disabilities age in place safely.

**Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)** offers the Home Accessibility Tax Credit, which provides up to \$1,500 annually in tax credits for accessibility renovations. Eligible improvements include walk-in showers, grab bars, accessible vanities, and comfort-height toilets. The Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) also provides forgivable loans up to \$3,500 for accessibility modifications for low-income homeowners.

**Ontario's Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit** allows you to claim up to \$1,500 in tax credits for accessibility improvements made by seniors or people with disabilities. The province also offers the Home and Community Care Support Services program, which may provide funding for bathroom modifications in certain circumstances.

**City of Ottawa** occasionally offers accessibility grant programs through Ottawa Community Housing and local non-profit organizations. The Canadian Red Cross and March of Dimes Canada also provide equipment lending programs and sometimes funding assistance for accessibility modifications.

**Most accessibility bathroom renovations in Ottawa cost between \$5,000-\$15,000**, so grants typically cover a portion of your project. Common eligible improvements include installing grab bars (\$150-\$400 each), converting to a walk-in shower (\$5,000-\$15,000), adding comfort-height toilets (\$400-\$800), and installing non-slip flooring.

**To maximize your funding**, work with a licensed contractor who understands accessibility requirements and can provide proper documentation for grant applications. Many programs require professional installation and building permits for major modifications. For a free consultation on accessible bathroom renovations and help navigating available grants, Ottawa Bathrooms can connect you with experienced contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network.

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