

OTTAWA BATHROOMS

Bathroom Maintenance

Grout care, caulking, cleaning tips, and preventive maintenance

4 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

ottawabathrooms.ca/construction-brain

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Q1

How do I prevent mold in my shower?

Proper ventilation and moisture control are the keys to preventing shower mold. The most important step is ensuring your bathroom fan runs during and for 30 minutes after each shower to remove humid air before it condenses on surfaces.

Ventilation is your first line of defense. Your bathroom exhaust fan should move at least 1 CFM per square foot of bathroom space - so a 50 square foot bathroom needs a 50 CFM fan minimum. In Ottawa's climate with cold winters, proper ventilation prevents warm, moist air from condensing on cold surfaces where mold thrives. If your current fan is loud or weak, upgrading to a quality Panasonic WhisperCeiling or similar model will encourage regular use.

Daily maintenance habits make a huge difference. After each shower, squeegee or wipe down shower walls to remove standing water. Leave the shower door or curtain partially open to allow air circulation. Weekly cleaning with a mold-preventing cleaner helps eliminate soap scum and organic matter that mold feeds on. Pay special attention to grout lines, corners, and areas around fixtures where water tends to collect.

Proper waterproofing during renovation prevents long-term mold issues. If you're planning a shower renovation, ensure your contractor installs a proper waterproof membrane behind tiles, uses mold-resistant materials like cement board instead of drywall, and seals all penetrations correctly. Quality grout and caulk with mold inhibitors provide better protection than basic products.

For persistent mold problems or if you're seeing mold behind tiles or fixtures, this often indicates a waterproofing failure that requires professional assessment. Want to discuss upgrading your shower with proper mold prevention? We offer free consultations to evaluate your current setup and recommend improvements.

Q2

How do I clean a bathroom exhaust fan?

Turn off the power at the breaker before starting - this is essential for safety when working with any electrical fixture. Most bathroom exhaust fans can be cleaned with basic tools and shouldn't require a contractor unless you discover wiring issues or the motor needs replacement.

Start by removing the fan cover, which typically pops off by squeezing the metal clips or removing screws. Soak the cover in warm soapy water while you work on the fan housing. Use a vacuum with a brush attachment to

remove dust and debris from the fan blades and motor housing. For stubborn buildup, wipe the blades with a damp cloth, being careful not to get water near the motor. **Never spray cleaning products directly into the fan housing** as this can damage electrical components.

In Ottawa's climate, bathroom fans work harder during winter months when indoor humidity is higher, so they tend to accumulate dust and lint more quickly. **Check your fan every 3-4 months** and clean it at least twice yearly. While cleaning, listen for unusual noises when you turn it back on - grinding or rattling sounds indicate the motor may need replacement.

Signs you need professional help include a fan that's very loud, doesn't move much air, or has visible damage to wiring. Modern bathroom fans should move at least 50 CFM (cubic feet per minute) for standard bathrooms, and many Ottawa homes benefit from upgrading to quieter, more efficient models during renovations. If your fan is over 10 years old and struggling, replacement during your next bathroom update will improve ventilation and reduce moisture problems.

Keep the fan running for 20-30 minutes after showers to properly remove moisture - this prevents mold growth and extends the life of your bathroom finishes, which is especially important in Ottawa's humid summers.

Q3

How often should I recaulk my bathroom?

Bathroom caulk should typically be replaced every 1-3 years, depending on the quality of the original installation, the type of caulk used, and your bathroom's humidity levels. However, you should inspect it regularly and replace it as soon as you notice cracking, peeling, or mold growth.

Signs it's time to recaulk include visible cracks or gaps, discoloration that won't clean off, peeling or pulling away from surfaces, and any black mold spots that keep returning after cleaning. In Ottawa's climate, bathrooms with poor ventilation may need more frequent recaulking due to higher moisture levels, especially during our humid summers and when heating systems create temperature fluctuations in winter.

Quality matters significantly when it comes to caulk longevity. Premium 100% silicone caulk with mold and mildew resistance will last longer than basic acrylic caulk, though it's more challenging to apply smoothly. Many Ottawa homeowners find that investing in quality caulk and proper application extends the replacement interval to 2-3 years rather than annual touch-ups.

Proper preparation is crucial for long-lasting results. This means completely removing old caulk (not just applying over it), thoroughly cleaning and drying the surfaces, and applying the new caulk in optimal conditions - ideally

when humidity is lower and temperatures are moderate. The shower or tub should be dry and shouldn't be used for 24 hours after application.

For best results and to avoid water damage from improper sealing, consider having recaulking done as part of regular bathroom maintenance by experienced contractors who can ensure proper waterproofing around tubs, showers, and sink areas.

When should I recaulk my shower?

Recaulk your shower when you notice cracking, peeling, discoloration, or gaps in the existing caulk - typically every 1-2 years for most Ottawa homes, though high-use showers may need attention sooner.

Signs it's time to recaulk include visible cracks or gaps where water can penetrate, black or pink mold growth on the caulk lines, caulk that feels soft or pulls away from surfaces, or persistent musty odors that suggest water is getting behind tiles. Don't wait until you see water damage - prevention is much cheaper than repairs.

In Ottawa's climate, temperature fluctuations cause expansion and contraction that can accelerate caulk failure.

Winter heating and summer humidity create conditions where caulk deteriorates faster, especially around tub edges and shower corners where movement is greatest. If your bathroom lacks proper ventilation, you may need to recaulk more frequently.

Choose 100% silicone caulk for wet areas rather than latex or acrylic versions. Silicone provides superior water resistance and flexibility. For tile showers, consider color-matched caulk that complements your grout. **Proper surface preparation** is crucial - remove all old caulk completely, clean with rubbing alcohol, and ensure surfaces are completely dry before applying new caulk.

Professional installation ensures proper waterproofing techniques and longer-lasting results. Poor caulking is one of the leading causes of water damage in Ottawa bathrooms, often leading to expensive repairs behind walls. For a comprehensive bathroom assessment or professional recaulking service, Ottawa Bathrooms can ensure your shower stays watertight and mold-free.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Bathrooms. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority before starting any construction or renovation project. Information is current as of February 23, 2026 and may change. Visit ottawabathrooms.ca for the latest answers.