

OTTAWA BATHROOMS

Showers & Tubs

Walk-in showers, tub-to-shower conversions,
freestanding tubs, and shower enclosures

23 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

ottawabathrooms.ca/construction-brain

Table of Contents

1. Should I get a walk-in shower or bathtub?
2. How do I choose between a shower door and curtain?
3. Do I need a permit just to replace a bathtub?
4. Can I add a bench to my shower?
5. We never use our tub. Should we just take it out and put in a shower?
6. Is a rain shower head worth it or just a gimmick?
7. Is it possible to convert my tub to a shower if the tub is against an outside wall?
8. Can I change my old tub to a walk-in shower?
9. Can I have a shower without a door, just open?
10. What kind of shower can replace a corner bathtub?
11. Is natural stone a good idea for showers, or is it too much maintenance?
12. Is it hard to convert a bathtub to a shower?
13. Can you put a shower where a tub used to be without major plumbing work?
14. What is a curbless shower, and is it difficult to build one?
15. How much water pressure do you need for a good shower?
16. My shower leaks into the ceiling below, what's wrong?
17. How big can the shower be if I remove my standard-size tub?
18. I'm 70 and want to switch my tub to a shower for safety, what options are there?
19. What is the minimum size for a walk-in shower?
20. Can a regular shower be converted to a walk-in shower for a wheelchair user?
21. What happens to the floor when you remove a bathtub?
22. Does removing a bathtub hurt resale value?
23. What tile is best for a walk-in shower?

Q1

Should I get a walk-in shower or bathtub?

The choice between a walk-in shower and bathtub depends on your household needs, bathroom size, and long-term plans. Walk-in showers are ideal for daily convenience and accessibility, while bathtubs offer relaxation and are essential if you have young children.

Walk-in showers excel in functionality and accessibility. They're easier to clean, use less water, and provide barrier-free access that's perfect for aging in place or mobility concerns. In Ottawa's market, homeowners increasingly choose walk-in showers for their primary bathrooms, especially in master ensuite renovations. They also make small bathrooms feel more spacious and can accommodate features like built-in benches, multiple shower heads, and grab bars for safety.

Bathtubs serve different lifestyle needs. If you have children under 10, a bathtub is practically essential for bath time. Many homeowners also value having at least one tub in the home for relaxation and potential resale value. Freestanding tubs have become popular in Ottawa renovations, creating a spa-like focal point, while alcove tubs maximize space efficiency in smaller bathrooms.

Consider your bathroom layout and home's overall bathing options. If this is your only full bathroom, keeping a tub maintains flexibility for future needs. However, if you have multiple bathrooms, dedicating your primary bathroom to a spacious walk-in shower often provides the best daily experience. In Ottawa homes, we often see homeowners convert their master ensuite to a walk-in shower while keeping a tub in the main family bathroom.

For the best decision, evaluate your current usage patterns and future needs. Most Ottawa families find that a well-designed walk-in shower gets used daily, while tubs are used occasionally. For a free consultation to discuss your specific bathroom layout and needs, request a quote from Ottawa Bathrooms.

Q2

How do I choose between a shower door and curtain?

Shower doors are generally the better long-term choice for most bathrooms, offering superior water containment, easier cleaning, and increased home value compared to curtains.

Glass shower doors provide excellent water protection and create a more open, spacious feel in your bathroom. Frameless glass doors are particularly popular in Ottawa renovations because they're easy to clean, don't harbor mold or mildew, and work with any tile design. Semi-frameless and framed options cost less while still

offering better water containment than curtains. The main considerations are your budget (doors range from \$400-\$2,000+ installed) and whether your shower opening can accommodate proper door installation.

Shower curtains work well for budget-conscious renovations or rental properties where you need a temporary solution. They're ideal for oddly-shaped shower openings, clawfoot tubs, or situations where door clearance is limited. Modern curtain options include fabric curtains with waterproof liners, hookless designs, and curved rods that add shower space. However, curtains require more frequent replacement and cleaning to prevent mold buildup in Ottawa's humid climate.

For Ottawa bathrooms, consider your long-term plans and maintenance preferences. If you're doing a full renovation, investing in a quality glass door typically provides better value and functionality. Glass doors also help contain heat and steam, which is beneficial during Ottawa's cold winters. Choose curtains if you're working with a tight budget, have an unusual shower configuration, or prefer the flexibility to easily change your bathroom's look.

The installation requirements differ significantly - curtains need only a rod and proper wall anchoring, while doors require precise measurements, proper waterproofing, and often professional installation to ensure proper operation and water sealing.

For a free consultation on shower door options for your Ottawa bathroom renovation, Ottawa Bathrooms can help you choose the best solution for your space and budget.

Q3

Do I need a permit just to replace a bathtub?

In most cases, simply replacing a bathtub with the same type of tub in the same location does not require a permit in Ottawa. However, if you're changing plumbing lines, electrical work, or making structural modifications, permits will be required.

Permit-free tub replacement typically applies when you're doing a direct swap - removing an old tub and installing a new one in exactly the same spot using existing plumbing connections. This is considered maintenance rather than renovation. The key is that no plumbing rough-in changes, electrical modifications, or structural work is involved.

You will need permits if your project involves moving plumbing lines, installing new electrical circuits (like for a jetted tub), removing walls, or converting from a tub to a shower. Any work that affects the home's plumbing, electrical, or structural systems requires proper permits and inspections. Additionally, if you're adding features like built-in lighting, exhaust fans, or heated floors as part of the tub replacement, permits become necessary.

Ottawa-specific considerations include ensuring your contractor pulls the appropriate permits when required. The City of Ottawa Building Services department can clarify permit requirements for your specific situation. Licensed renovation contractors typically handle permit applications and know exactly when they're needed, which protects you from potential issues during home sales or insurance claims.

For a straightforward tub replacement, focus on proper waterproofing around the new tub and ensuring all connections are secure. Even permit-free work should be done correctly to prevent water damage. If you're unsure whether your project requires permits, it's always better to check with Ottawa Building Services or consult with a licensed contractor who can assess your specific situation.

For complex tub installations or bathroom renovations requiring permits, Ottawa Bathrooms can handle the entire process including permit applications and inspections.

Q4

Can I add a bench to my shower?

Yes, you can definitely add a bench to your shower - it's one of the most popular upgrades homeowners request for both comfort and accessibility. A shower bench provides a convenient place to sit while shaving, washing feet, or simply relaxing under the water.

Built-in tile benches are the most durable and waterproof option. These are constructed during renovation using a concrete or foam base, then covered with the same tile as your shower walls. They can be designed as corner benches, spanning one wall, or even as a floating bench that appears to hover above the floor. The key is ensuring proper waterproofing underneath and sloping the bench surface slightly toward the drain to prevent water pooling.

Freestanding shower benches offer a simpler solution if you're not renovating. Look for benches made from teak, bamboo, or marine-grade materials that can handle constant moisture. However, these require regular maintenance and don't provide the seamless, permanent solution of a built-in bench.

In Ottawa's climate, proper waterproofing is critical for any built-in bench installation. The bench area needs waterproof membrane extending behind and underneath the structure, and all seams must be properly sealed. Most homeowners find that adding a bench during a full shower renovation is the most cost-effective approach, typically adding \$800-2,000 to the project cost depending on size and materials.

Installation considerations include ensuring adequate shower space (minimum 30" x 30" shower recommended), proper height (typically 17-19" from floor), and slip-resistant surface treatment. The bench should integrate with your shower's drainage and not interfere with water flow patterns.

For a professional assessment of adding a bench to your specific shower, Ottawa Bathrooms can evaluate your space and recommend the best approach during a free consultation.

Q5

We never use our tub. Should we just take it out and put in a shower?

Removing an unused tub and installing a shower is one of the most popular bathroom renovations - it typically increases usable space, improves accessibility, and can add value to your home if done properly.

The conversion process involves several key considerations. First, you'll need to assess your home's resale value impact. If you have other full bathrooms with tubs in your home, removing one tub usually isn't a concern. However, if this is your only tub and you have young children or plan to sell soon, you might want to keep at least

one tub in the house for family needs and buyer appeal.

From a renovation standpoint, tub-to-shower conversions are relatively straightforward but require proper waterproofing and potentially some plumbing adjustments. The existing plumbing rough-in can usually be adapted, though you may want to relocate shower controls or add body sprays. The key is ensuring proper waterproof membrane installation behind the new shower surround - this is critical in Ottawa's climate where temperature fluctuations can cause water damage if not done correctly.

In Ottawa's market, a well-executed tub-to-shower conversion typically costs \$3,000 to \$8,000 depending on finishes and features. This includes demolition, waterproofing, new shower base or tile pan, wall surrounds, fixtures, and glass enclosure. Popular options include walk-in showers with minimal threshold for accessibility, built-in niches for storage, and frameless glass doors that make the space feel larger.

The project usually requires a plumbing permit in Ottawa since you're modifying fixture locations and potentially drain connections. A licensed contractor will handle the permit application and ensure all work meets Ontario Building Code requirements for waterproofing and accessibility.

For a free estimate on your tub-to-shower conversion, request a quote from Ottawa Bathrooms to discuss your specific space and design preferences.

Q6

Is a rain shower head worth it or just a gimmick?

Rain shower heads are definitely worth it for many homeowners - they provide a genuinely different and more luxurious shower experience compared to standard shower heads. The wide, gentle spray pattern creates a spa-like feeling that many people find relaxing and enjoyable.

The main benefits are comfort and coverage. Rain shower heads typically measure 8-12 inches in diameter (compared to 3-4 inches for standard heads), providing full-body water coverage without the concentrated pressure points of traditional heads. The water falls straight down like natural rainfall, which feels more natural and soothing. Many Ottawa homeowners who upgrade to rain heads report they actually look forward to their showers more.

However, there are practical considerations for Ottawa homes. Rain shower heads require good water pressure to function properly - ideally 40+ PSI. Many older Ottawa homes have lower pressure that makes rain heads feel weak and disappointing. They also use more water (typically 2.5 gallons per minute), which increases utility costs. The larger size means they need adequate ceiling height and proper positioning - usually requiring plumbing adjustments during renovation.

For the best experience, consider a combination setup. Many homeowners install both a rain head and a handheld shower on the same valve system. This gives you the luxury rain experience when you want it, plus the practicality of a handheld for washing hair, cleaning the shower, or when you need more pressure. Quality rain heads from brands like Kohler or Moen typically cost \$200-800, with installation adding \$300-600 depending on plumbing modifications needed.

The verdict depends on your priorities and home setup. If you value a relaxing shower experience and have good water pressure, a rain head is a worthwhile upgrade that adds both enjoyment and resale value to your bathroom renovation.

Q7

Is it possible to convert my tub to a shower if the tub is against an outside wall?

Yes, you can absolutely convert a tub to a shower when it's against an outside wall. This is actually a very common renovation scenario that licensed contractors handle regularly in Ottawa homes.

The key considerations for exterior wall conversions involve proper waterproofing and insulation management. Your contractor will need to ensure the exterior wall cavity maintains proper insulation while installing new plumbing fixtures. The existing tub plumbing can typically be reconfigured for a shower, though you may need additional rough-in work for new shower valves or multiple shower heads.

Waterproofing becomes especially critical with exterior walls since any moisture penetration could lead to serious structural issues or mold problems. Professional contractors use specialized waterproof membranes behind tile work and ensure proper vapor barriers are maintained in the wall assembly. The shower pan installation also requires careful attention to drainage slopes and waterproof sealing.

In Ottawa's climate, exterior wall renovations must meet Ontario Building Code requirements for thermal bridging and moisture control. Your contractor will likely need to coordinate with building permits if structural changes are involved, particularly if enlarging the shower footprint or modifying window locations.

Design-wise, exterior wall showers offer great opportunities for natural light through existing windows or new glass block installations. Many Ottawa homeowners choose to install larger format tiles on exterior walls to minimize grout lines, and consider heated flooring systems since exterior walls can feel cooler.

For your specific project, expect costs between \$3,000 - \$8,000 for a standard tub-to-shower conversion, with additional costs if extensive plumbing modifications or window work is needed. A licensed contractor can assess your exterior wall construction and provide recommendations for the most effective approach. For a free estimate on your bathroom renovation, request a quote from Ottawa Bathrooms to discuss your specific exterior wall considerations.

Q8

Can I change my old tub to a walk-in shower?

Yes, converting your old tub to a walk-in shower is one of the most popular bathroom renovations. This conversion can improve accessibility, create more space, and modernize your bathroom's look and functionality.

The conversion process involves removing your existing tub, modifying the plumbing rough-in if needed, and installing a new shower base with proper waterproofing. The shower pan needs to be sloped correctly for drainage, and all walls require waterproof membrane behind the tile or shower surround. Most conversions can use the existing plumbing location, but you may need to relocate the shower valve to a more convenient height.

In Ottawa, tub-to-shower conversions typically cost \$3,000 to \$8,000 depending on the materials and complexity. A basic conversion with acrylic walls runs on the lower end, while custom tile work with frameless glass doors reaches the higher range. The project usually takes 3-5 days once materials arrive. You'll need building permits if you're moving plumbing lines or making structural changes, though most conversions work within the existing footprint.

Design considerations include choosing between a standard threshold shower base or a barrier-free curbless design for better accessibility. Curbless showers require more extensive floor preparation but eliminate the step-over barrier. Consider adding grab bars during construction, using slip-resistant flooring, and ensuring adequate lighting. A frameless glass enclosure creates an open, modern feel while containing water effectively.

The key to success is proper waterproofing - this isn't a DIY project due to the complexity of plumbing modifications and waterproofing requirements. For a professional assessment of your specific bathroom layout and a free estimate on your tub-to-shower conversion, request a quote from Ottawa Bathrooms.

Q9

Can I have a shower without a door, just open?

Yes, you can absolutely have a doorless shower, often called a "walk-in" or "open" shower. This design creates a seamless, spa-like feel and eliminates the need for glass doors or curtains.

Proper design is crucial for a doorless shower to function well. The shower area needs adequate size - typically at least 4 feet wide by 6 feet deep - to prevent water from splashing into the rest of the bathroom. The shower floor must slope properly toward the drain (minimum 1/4 inch per foot), and you'll need a larger drain or linear drain system to handle water flow effectively.

Waterproofing becomes even more critical with an open shower design. The entire shower area, including walls and floors, requires professional waterproof membrane installation. In Ottawa's climate, proper ventilation is essential to prevent moisture issues - you'll likely need a more powerful exhaust fan rated for the increased humidity.

Design considerations include installing a partial glass panel or pony wall to help contain spray while maintaining the open feel. The showerhead placement and type matter significantly - rainfall heads or those with gentler spray patterns work better than high-pressure jets. Heated floors are particularly beneficial in doorless showers since there's more air circulation.

Building code requirements in Ottawa may include specific ventilation and waterproofing standards for open showers. City of Ottawa requirements may vary - confirm with your licensed contractor to ensure proper permits and inspections.

For a professionally designed doorless shower that meets all code requirements, request a quote from Ottawa Bathrooms for expert installation and waterproofing.

Q10

What kind of shower can replace a corner bathtub?

A **corner shower enclosure is the most natural replacement for a corner bathtub**, taking advantage of the existing plumbing location and maximizing your bathroom's floor space. You have several excellent options depending on your budget and style preferences.

Neo-angle showers are specifically designed for corner installations and offer the most space-efficient solution. These typically feature a diamond-shaped footprint with angled glass doors that swing outward, creating an open feel while fitting perfectly into the corner space. The angled entry also makes the shower feel larger than traditional square corner units.

Square or rectangular corner showers are another popular choice, especially if you want maximum interior shower space. These can be custom-tiled or use prefabricated bases, and work well with sliding doors or pivot doors depending on your bathroom layout. Custom tile work allows you to extend the shower walls to any height and incorporate features like built-in niches or bench seating.

In Ottawa's market, a **basic corner shower conversion** typically runs \$3,000 - \$6,000 for a prefabricated unit with standard fixtures, while a **custom-tiled corner shower** ranges from \$5,000 - \$12,000 depending on tile selection and features like frameless glass enclosures or rainfall showerheads.

Waterproofing is critical in corner installations since you're dealing with two wall intersections. Proper membrane installation behind the tile and careful attention to corner sealing will prevent future water damage. The existing corner plumbing location usually works well for the new shower valve, though you may want to relocate it to a more convenient height.

For a free estimate on your corner tub-to-shower conversion, request a quote from Ottawa Bathrooms to discuss the best design options for your specific space and budget.

Q11

Is natural stone a good idea for showers, or is it too much maintenance?

Natural stone can be stunning in showers, but it requires significantly more maintenance than porcelain or ceramic alternatives. Whether it's "worth it" depends on your lifestyle and commitment to upkeep.

The maintenance reality is that natural stone needs regular sealing (every 1-3 years depending on the stone type), daily squeegee use to prevent water spots, and weekly cleaning with pH-neutral products. Marble and

limestone are particularly high-maintenance since they're prone to etching from soap and shampoo acids. Granite and slate are more durable but still require consistent care to prevent staining and maintain their appearance.

Waterproofing becomes critical with natural stone installations. The stone itself is porous, so proper membrane installation behind the stone is essential to prevent water penetration into wall cavities. In Ottawa's climate, any moisture that gets behind the stone can freeze and cause significant damage. This makes professional installation with proper waterproofing systems non-negotiable.

For Ottawa homeowners, consider your daily routine and long-term commitment. If you love the natural beauty and don't mind the extra care, stones like granite or quartzite offer good durability. However, if you want a low-maintenance shower, large-format porcelain tiles that mimic natural stone provide the look without the upkeep. Many of our clients choose porcelain "wood-look" or "stone-look" tiles that are virtually indistinguishable from the real thing.

The practical middle ground is using natural stone as an accent - perhaps a feature wall or niche - while using porcelain for the main shower surfaces. This gives you the natural stone aesthetic in a manageable way.

For a consultation about stone options that work best for your specific shower project, Ottawa Bathrooms can help you weigh the pros and cons based on your lifestyle and budget.

Q12

Is it hard to convert a bathtub to a shower?

Converting a bathtub to a shower is a **moderate complexity renovation** that most homeowners find challenging to DIY, but it's a routine project for experienced bathroom contractors. The difficulty depends on your existing plumbing configuration and whether you're keeping the same footprint.

The main challenges involve plumbing modifications - you'll need to relocate the water supply from tub height to shower height, install new shower valves, and potentially add additional drain capacity. The existing tub drain may need repositioning depending on your new shower base design. **Waterproofing is critical** - improper membrane installation behind shower walls is the leading cause of water damage in bathroom renovations. You'll also need to remove the existing tub (which can weigh 300+ pounds when cast iron), frame new walls if changing the layout, install cement board backing, apply waterproof membrane, tile the walls and floor, and install the shower door or curtain system.

In Ottawa, tub-to-shower conversions typically cost \$3,000 - \$8,000 depending on finishes and complexity. Most projects require plumbing permits since you're modifying water supply lines. The work usually takes 3-5 days

with proper sequencing - demolition, plumbing rough-in, waterproofing, tiling, and fixture installation. **Popular options include prefab shower bases** (faster installation) or custom tile bases (more design flexibility).

Consider your household needs carefully - while walk-in showers offer easier access and modern appeal, removing your only bathtub can impact resale value if you have young children or it's the primary bathroom. Many Ottawa homeowners choose **barrier-free designs** for aging-in-place, incorporating grab bars and built-in seating.

For a project this complex involving plumbing and waterproofing, most homeowners benefit from professional installation to ensure proper permits, code compliance, and warranty protection. Want to discuss your specific conversion project? Ottawa Bathrooms offers free consultations to review your space and provide detailed estimates.

Q13

Can you put a shower where a tub used to be without major plumbing work?

Yes, you can usually install a shower where a tub used to be without major plumbing changes. Most tub-to-shower conversions use the existing plumbing connections since both fixtures require similar water supply and drain locations.

The existing **hot and cold water lines** that fed your tub can typically supply a new shower valve, and the **drain location** usually works well for a shower base. The main plumbing modification involves installing a new shower valve (mixing valve) to replace the old tub faucet, which is straightforward work for a licensed plumber. In Ottawa, this type of conversion typically costs between **\$3,000 - \$8,000** depending on the shower style and finishes you choose.

Waterproofing is the critical step that many homeowners overlook. Even though you're using existing plumbing, the walls need proper waterproof membrane installation behind the new tile or shower surround. This prevents water damage that could cost thousands to repair later. The shower base also requires careful installation to ensure proper drainage and prevent leaks.

Ottawa building requirements may require permits if you're doing electrical work (like adding new lighting or ventilation) or making structural changes, but a basic tub-to-shower conversion often doesn't require permits. However, all plumbing work should be done by licensed professionals to ensure it meets Ontario Building Code standards and maintains your home insurance coverage.

The conversion typically takes 3-5 days and involves removing the old tub, installing the new shower base, waterproofing, tiling or installing shower walls, and connecting the new fixtures. For a free estimate on your tub-to-shower conversion, request a quote from Ottawa Bathrooms to discuss your specific layout and preferences.

Q14

What is a curbless shower, and is it difficult to build one?

A **curbless shower** is a walk-in shower design with no raised threshold or "curb" at the entrance, creating a seamless transition from the bathroom floor into the shower area. This barrier-free design allows you to simply walk straight into the shower without stepping over anything.

Curbless showers are significantly more complex to build than traditional curbed showers and require careful planning from the design stage. The main challenge is creating proper drainage and waterproofing without the

natural water barrier that a curb provides. The shower floor must be sloped precisely (typically 1/4" per foot minimum) toward the drain to prevent water from flowing into the main bathroom area. This often requires lowering the shower floor structure during framing, which can be complicated in existing homes.

Waterproofing becomes critical with curbless designs since there's no physical barrier to contain water. A continuous waterproof membrane must extend well beyond the shower area, and the transition between shower and bathroom flooring requires special attention. The drain system also needs to handle water flow efficiently - linear drains are often preferred over traditional center drains for better water management.

In Ottawa's market, expect to pay **\$8,000 - \$20,000** for a professionally installed curbless shower, depending on size and finishes. The complexity means this isn't a DIY project - improper installation can lead to water damage in walls and subfloors. City of Ottawa requirements may vary for structural modifications, so permits are typically required when altering floor structures.

Curbless showers offer excellent accessibility benefits and create a spa-like, modern aesthetic. However, they work best in larger bathrooms where you can achieve proper slope without the shower floor being noticeably lower than the rest of the room.

For a free consultation on your curbless shower project, Ottawa Bathrooms can assess your space and explain the specific requirements for your home.

Q15

How much water pressure do you need for a good shower?

Most people need at least 40-60 PSI (pounds per square inch) for a satisfying shower experience, though the optimal range is 60-80 PSI. Below 40 PSI, you'll notice weak water flow that makes rinsing soap and shampoo difficult.

Water pressure in Ottawa homes typically ranges from 40-80 PSI, with most municipal areas receiving adequate pressure. However, **homes at higher elevations or at the end of water lines** may experience lower pressure. You can test your current pressure with an inexpensive gauge that screws onto any hose bib or have a plumber measure it during a service call.

Low pressure issues often stem from older galvanized pipes that have corroded internally, partially closed shut-off valves, or pressure-reducing valves set too low. In Ottawa's older neighborhoods like the Glebe or Westboro, homes built before 1960 commonly have galvanized supply lines that restrict flow over time. **High-efficiency showerheads** can help maximize the feel of water pressure even when PSI is on the lower end of acceptable

range.

If you're planning a bathroom renovation and currently have pressure issues, this is the ideal time to **upgrade your supply lines to modern PEX or copper piping**. A pressure-boosting pump system can also be installed if municipal pressure is consistently low, though this requires proper sizing and installation by a licensed plumber.

For your shower renovation project, consider having water pressure tested before selecting fixtures. High-end rain showerheads and body sprays require higher pressure to function properly, while standard showerheads work well at 40+ PSI.

Q16

My shower leaks into the ceiling below, what's wrong?

Water is penetrating through your shower's waterproof barrier and seeping into the floor assembly below.

This is a serious issue that requires immediate attention to prevent structural damage, mold growth, and potential ceiling collapse.

The most common causes are **failed waterproofing behind the shower walls** or **deteriorated caulking and grout**. In Ottawa's older homes, many showers were built before modern waterproofing standards, relying only on tile and grout as the water barrier. Over time, grout cracks and caulk shrinks, allowing water to penetrate the wall cavity and eventually reach the ceiling below. Another frequent culprit is **improper or missing waterproof membrane** behind the tile, which should extend at least 6 inches above the shower head height according to Ontario Building Code requirements.

Plumbing leaks are another possibility, particularly with older copper or galvanized pipes common in Ottawa homes built before the 1990s. The leak could be from shower valve connections, supply lines behind the wall, or even the shower drain assembly. Sometimes the issue is a combination - a small plumbing leak that's made worse by failed waterproofing, creating a larger water intrusion problem.

Stop using the shower immediately to prevent further damage. Turn off water supply to the shower if possible, and place a bucket under any active dripping in the ceiling below. Contact a licensed renovation contractor or plumber right away for proper diagnosis - they'll need to determine whether this is a waterproofing failure, plumbing leak, or both. In Ottawa, this type of repair typically requires opening walls to assess damage and may need building permits depending on the extent of reconstruction required.

For emergency repairs and proper waterproofing solutions, Ottawa Bathrooms can connect you with experienced contractors who understand Ottawa's building requirements and climate challenges.

Q17

How big can the shower be if I remove my standard-size tub?

A standard 60-inch tub opens up significant space for a much larger shower. Most standard tubs occupy about 30 square feet (5 feet long by 2.5 feet wide), which can typically accommodate a 4x4 foot or even 4x5 foot shower enclosure depending on your bathroom layout.

The exact shower size depends on your bathroom's dimensions and plumbing configuration. If you have a standard 5x8 foot bathroom, removing the tub could allow for a spacious 4x4 foot shower with room for built-in benches or niches. In larger bathrooms, you might achieve a luxurious 5x4 foot or even larger walk-in shower. The key is working within your existing plumbing rough-in - if the drain location works for your new shower, you'll save significantly on renovation costs.

In Ottawa's older homes, this conversion is particularly popular because many bathrooms were built with standard 60-inch alcove tubs that feel cramped by today's standards. The conversion typically costs \$3,000 - \$8,000 depending on tile choices and whether you need to move plumbing lines. You'll also need to consider waterproofing requirements under Ontario Building Code - proper membrane installation is critical for any shower renovation.

Design-wise, removing the tub gives you flexibility for modern features like rainfall showerheads, multiple body sprays, built-in seating, or even a steam shower system. Many homeowners opt for frameless glass enclosures to maximize the sense of space. Consider adding a linear drain for a sleek, modern look and easier cleaning.

For the most accurate assessment of your shower size potential, measure your current tub area and consult with a licensed contractor who can evaluate your plumbing configuration and structural requirements. For a free estimate on your tub-to-shower conversion, request a quote from Ottawa Bathrooms to discuss your specific space and design goals.

Q18

I'm 70 and want to switch my tub to a shower for safety, what options are there?

A tub-to-shower conversion is an excellent safety upgrade for your home. You have several options ranging from simple barrier-free showers to fully accessible walk-in designs that eliminate the need to step over a tub edge.

Walk-in showers are the most popular choice for seniors, featuring a low or zero-threshold entry that's easy to navigate. These can include built-in seating, multiple grab bars strategically placed for support, and non-slip flooring materials like textured porcelain or natural stone with anti-slip treatments. The shower area typically uses the same footprint as your existing tub, making it a straightforward conversion without major structural changes.

Barrier-free or curbless showers offer the ultimate in accessibility, with no step at all to enter the shower. However, these require careful planning for proper drainage and waterproofing, and may need floor modifications to create the necessary slope. In Ottawa homes, this sometimes means adjusting the subfloor, which could require a

building permit depending on the extent of structural work.

Comfort features to consider include comfort-height shower controls (positioned 38-48 inches from the floor), handheld shower heads with slide bars, built-in corner seats or fold-down benches, and adequate lighting. Heated floors are particularly beneficial for seniors, providing warmth and helping to dry the floor surface quickly to prevent slips.

In Ottawa's market, a basic tub-to-shower conversion typically ranges from \$3,000 to \$8,000, while a fully accessible walk-in shower with premium features can cost \$8,000 to \$15,000. The investment significantly improves safety and often increases your home's value, especially as more buyers seek aging-in-place features.

City of Ottawa requirements may vary for accessibility modifications - a licensed contractor will handle any necessary permits and ensure proper waterproofing and drainage. For a free consultation on creating a safe, accessible shower that meets your specific needs, request a quote from Ottawa Bathrooms to discuss the best options for your space and budget.

Q19

What is the minimum size for a walk-in shower?

The minimum size for a walk-in shower is **32" x 32"** (approximately 2.7 feet by 2.7 feet) according to the **Ontario Building Code**, though this creates a very tight space that most homeowners find uncomfortable for daily use.

For practical comfort, most renovation contractors recommend a minimum of **36" x 36"** for a walk-in shower, with 42" x 36" being much more comfortable for most adults. The extra space allows for easier movement, reduces water splashing outside the shower area, and provides room for shower accessories like corner shelves or grab bars.

In Ottawa's typical home layouts, we often see homeowners converting standard 60" tub spaces into walk-in showers, which provides excellent dimensions of approximately 60" x 30-32". This gives you plenty of room for a comfortable shower experience while maximizing the existing footprint. When planning accessibility features like grab bars or a shower seat, you'll want even more space - typically 42" x 42" minimum.

The shower entrance width must be at least 22" clear opening according to building code, though 24-26" feels much more comfortable and accommodates accessibility needs better. Consider that glass doors typically reduce the opening by 2-3 inches compared to the rough opening.

Ceiling height requirements in Ottawa call for a minimum 6'8" over the shower area, with most modern installations using standard 8' ceilings. Proper waterproofing and drainage are critical regardless of size - the shower pan must slope toward the drain at 1/4" per foot.

For a comfortable, code-compliant walk-in shower that works for most Ottawa homes, plan for at least 36" x 42" if possible. Want to discuss converting your existing tub space into a walk-in shower? We offer free consultations to help you maximize your bathroom's potential.

Q20

Can a regular shower be converted to a walk-in shower for a wheelchair user?

Yes, most regular showers can be converted to wheelchair-accessible walk-in showers, though the extent of renovation depends on your current setup and specific accessibility needs.

The key requirement for wheelchair accessibility is creating a **barrier-free entry** with no threshold or step. If you currently have a standard shower with a curb or step, this will need to be removed and the floor properly sloped for

drainage. The shower area typically needs to be at least 30" x 60" for basic wheelchair access, though 36" x 60" or larger provides more comfortable maneuvering space.

Essential modifications include installing grab bars rated for 250+ pounds, using non-slip flooring materials, and ensuring adequate turning radius outside the shower. A fold-down shower seat and handheld shower head with adjustable height mounting are also important features. The shower controls should be positioned within easy reach, typically 38-48 inches from the floor and located on the side wall rather than the back wall.

In Ottawa, this type of conversion requires careful attention to **waterproofing and drainage** since you're modifying the shower pan. The floor must be properly sloped (typically 1/4 inch per foot) toward a linear drain to prevent water from flowing into adjacent areas. City of Ottawa requirements may vary for structural modifications - confirm with your licensed contractor about permit requirements.

Material considerations include using larger format tiles with minimal grout lines for easier wheelchair navigation, and selecting slip-resistant surfaces with a coefficient of friction of 0.6 or higher. Proper waterproof membrane installation behind all wall surfaces is critical when doing this level of renovation.

For a comprehensive wheelchair-accessible shower conversion in Ottawa, expect costs between \$8,000 - \$20,000 depending on the extent of modifications needed. For a free consultation on making your bathroom more accessible, Ottawa Bathrooms can assess your specific space and accessibility requirements.

Q21

What happens to the floor when you remove a bathtub?

Removing a bathtub typically reveals damaged subfloor underneath that needs repair or replacement. The area under and around the tub often has water damage, rot, or structural issues that weren't visible before removal.

Subfloor damage is extremely common when removing old bathtubs, especially in Ottawa homes built before the 1990s. Years of moisture, small leaks, and inadequate waterproofing take their toll on the wooden subfloor. You'll often find soft spots, black staining from mold, or sections that need to be cut out and replaced. The joists underneath may also show signs of water damage that require attention.

The existing flooring around the tub creates another challenge. If you're keeping the current bathroom floor, there will be a gap where the tub sat since most flooring was installed around the tub, not underneath it. This means you'll need matching tile or flooring material to fill the space, which can be difficult to find for older installations. Many homeowners use tub removal as an opportunity to install completely new flooring throughout the bathroom.

Proper subfloor preparation is critical before installing your new shower or tub. This includes replacing any damaged plywood or OSB, ensuring the surface is level, and installing proper waterproof membrane systems. In Ottawa's climate, moisture control is especially important to prevent future problems. The subfloor must also be properly sloped toward drains for shower installations.

Most tub removal projects require professional assessment to determine the extent of subfloor repairs needed and ensure proper waterproofing installation. For a free consultation on your bathroom renovation project, Ottawa Bathrooms can evaluate your specific situation and provide guidance on subfloor requirements.

Q22

Does removing a bathtub hurt resale value?

Removing a bathtub typically has minimal impact on resale value in most Ottawa homes, especially if you're replacing it with a well-designed shower. The key factors are your home's layout, target buyer demographic, and the quality of the replacement.

Market trends strongly favor showers over tubs in today's Ottawa real estate market. Most homebuyers prioritize functionality and low maintenance over soaking tubs, particularly in busy households. A spacious walk-in shower with quality tile work and modern fixtures often appeals more to buyers than an outdated tub they'll never use.

The exception is homes with only one bathroom - removing the only tub in a house can impact families with young children who need bathing options. However, if you have multiple bathrooms and can keep one tub elsewhere in the home, removing a tub for a shower conversion rarely hurts value. In fact, **converting a cramped tub-shower combo into a spacious walk-in shower** often increases both functionality and perceived value.

Quality of execution matters more than the tub itself. A professionally installed tub-to-shower conversion with proper waterproofing, quality tile work, and modern fixtures typically adds more value than leaving an old, worn tub in place. Ottawa buyers appreciate move-in ready bathrooms with contemporary finishes over dated spaces requiring immediate renovation.

Consider your neighborhood and home style when making this decision. In family-oriented Ottawa suburbs, keeping at least one tub in the home makes sense. In downtown condos or homes targeting professionals, a luxurious shower often provides better return on investment.

For a professional assessment of how a tub-to-shower conversion would impact your specific property's value, request a consultation from Ottawa Bathrooms to discuss your renovation options.

Q23

What tile is best for a walk-in shower?

Porcelain tile is generally the best choice for walk-in showers due to its low water absorption rate, durability, and wide range of design options that can mimic natural stone, wood, or concrete.

For walk-in shower walls, **large format porcelain tiles (12"x24" or larger)** are ideal because they create fewer grout lines, reducing maintenance and potential water penetration points. The smooth, non-porous surface resists stains and soap buildup while being easy to clean. Modern porcelain can achieve stunning looks - from Carrara marble veining to natural wood grain textures - without the maintenance requirements of natural materials.

Shower floor tiles require special consideration for safety and drainage. Choose porcelain or ceramic tiles with a **textured or matte finish** to prevent slipping when wet. Smaller format tiles (2"x2" to 6"x6") work well on shower floors because the additional grout lines provide better traction. Mosaic tiles are particularly popular for shower pans as they conform well to the required slope toward the drain.

In Ottawa's climate, **frost-resistant porcelain is essential** if your shower is on an exterior wall or in a basement where temperature fluctuations occur. Natural stone like travertine or marble can work beautifully but requires regular sealing and more maintenance. Avoid large format tiles on shower floors as they can create uneven surfaces that don't drain properly.

Proper waterproofing behind any tile is crucial - this means a quality waterproof membrane system, not just relying on grout and caulk. Professional installation ensures proper slope, drainage, and waterproofing that prevents costly water damage. For a free consultation on your walk-in shower project, Ottawa Bathrooms can help you select the right tile and ensure proper installation.

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.