

A rainhead shower: the only time a downpour is truly welcome

# THE COMFORT OF THINGS

THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS IN YOUR HOME THAT ARE LIKE GOOD FRIENDS: THEY ALWAYS CHEER YOU UP. THIS MONTH WE FEEL THE LOVE FOR A PROPER SHOWER

Words: CLARE GOGERTY

Much has been said about the relaxing properties of a long, hot soak and the pleasures it brings, and rightly so, but isn't it time the shower got a shout-out? Often dismissed as a utilitarian part of the daily routine – something to be ducked in and out of for a quick sluicing before work – its invigorating benefits are often forgotten. But something amazing, almost magical, can happen when warm water hits naked skin.

In the morning, a hot shower can wake up a sleepy mind, reboot a sluggish body, and cause creative thoughts to surface. After a bracing outdoor swim, little is as welcome as standing beneath a poolside shower and feeling the warmth percolate from your core to your fingertips. Coming home after a run, a shower not only freshens you up, but eases tight muscles. In the evening (an hour and a half before bed is ideal), it can adjust the body's temperature, which in turns regulates your circadian rhythms and eases you into slumber. A shower has even been said to boost the 'love hormone' oxytocin, more often released during kissing. And it creates a steamy atmosphere, good for clearing your sinuses and keeping houseplants happy.

All of this only happens, of course, when the shower is a good one and is powered by a decent amount of pressure – a shower cistern generally needs to be 3–4 metres above the shower head to achieve this. (If this is not possible, a pump can be employed.) A measly

drizzle from a hand-held attachment just won't cut it. Fortunately, there are many different showers to choose from to create the effect desired, ranging from space-saving over-the-bath versions, to stand-alone enclosures made of toughened safety glass, and frameless wet rooms.

The choice of showerheads is also wide-ranging. A ceiling 'rainwater' showerhead replicates the feeling of standing under a (warm) waterfall. Hansgrohe makes a Raindance Shower Head (£292, [cphart.co.uk](http://cphart.co.uk)) which will give you a good drenching, and its Raindance Wall-Mounted Rain Shower Spout (£271, [cphart.co.uk](http://cphart.co.uk)) is like standing beneath a river as it gently gushes over a rocky ledge. Wall-mounted showerheads, on the other hand, are prized for being adjustable, so you can direct its jets at a tight muscle, say, or to hit your shoulders on between-hair-washing days.

As for the downside of showers, they can dehydrate the skin if enjoyed too frequently, but this can be remedied by the application of generous amounts of moisturising lotion afterwards. Even better if this matches your body wash and shampoo – buying delicious products is another reason why showers rock.

"Something amazing, almost magical, can happen when warm water hits naked skin"

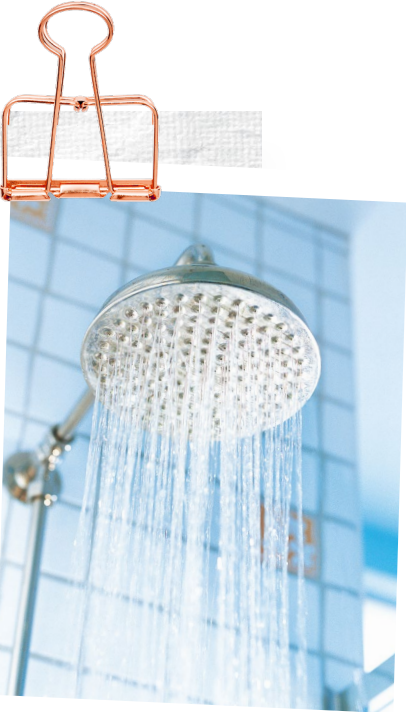
## THE POWER OF SHOWERS

**Shower practices from around the world**

**Japanese tradition** separates the bath from the shower – each is in a different room. A shower is taken before having a bath to get thoroughly clean: the shower is for cleanliness; the bath for purification. Rather than stand up to shower, the Japanese sit on a stool and use a hand-shower to rinse.

**A typical shower,** depending on length of time spent beneath it, can use as much as 230 litres of water. With water economy in mind, the Navy introduced a less wasteful method: sailors were instructed to turn the shower on to get wet, turn it off while soaping up, then turn it back off to rinse. This water-saving practice has now been adopted by some eco-warriors. Or you could try

a water-saving shower head: some have a button to reduce water flow. **Although the Nordic method** of keeping clean is all about the sauna, the plunge pool or cold shower that follows, is as important as the heat. A short burst of cold water (a couple of minutes is plenty) stimulates the circulation and generally makes you feel alive. (For more cold shower benefits, see overleaf.) »



PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES





### THREE TO MAKE, BUY OR CUSTOMISE

Shower curtains divide opinion. There are those who resist them, favouring a glass screen; others appreciate their cheer and affordability. Here are three ways to bring one into your home.

**MAKE**

The only really tricky thing when making a shower curtain is the grommets (metal eyelets), but once you've bought a grommet kit (£9.52, [drapertools.com](http://drapertools.com)), you'll be away. First, choose your fabric – vinyl, polyester or a polyester/cotton blend fabrics are ideal. An average curtain measures 190x190cm but you'll need to add 40cm for the hem and 20cm on either side to turn in, so you may need to stitch two pieces together. Fold the top edge over twice (10cm each time) and stitch. Repeat for the bottom and sides (5cm each side). Mark position of grommets (a typical curtain requires 12), punch a hole in the centre of the mark, insert grommets and hang.

**BUY**

Options abound when buying a shower curtain. Ikea has coated polyester versions with groovy prints (from £9, [ikea.com](http://ikea.com)). H&M has a pretty photoprint leafy one (below). Marimekko produces a poppy print polyester one (£52, [cloudberryliving.co.uk](http://cloudberryliving.co.uk)).

**CUSTOMISE**

Any photograph, or photographs, of your choice can be printed on to a shower curtain. [Bagsoflove.co.uk](http://Bagsoflove.co.uk) will print images onto waterproof fabric, from £95. [Zazzle.co.uk](http://Zazzle.co.uk) will print pictures or an inspirational quote, from £48.30.



Navajo four-piece towel bale, £23.99, [argos.co.uk](http://argos.co.uk)

### HOME QUANDARIES

*I keep reading about the benefits of a cold shower but, no matter what they say, I cannot bring myself to step under a torrent of icy water. Is there any way to make the experience more bearable?*

**Answer in brief:** *be stealthy. Start with a warm shower, then turn the temperature down to chilly.* You are right, there are indeed many, many benefits to showering beneath cold water. So many, in fact, that you wonder why we don't all do it. Then you remember the wince-inducing, intense shock to the system that it entails and turn the tap up to maximum heat. To encourage you to take the necessary step, here is a reminder of those benefits. When cold water hits the head and skin it sends a jolt of electrical impulses from the peripheral nerve endings to the brain. This can boost your mood and startle you out of gloominess. It also quickens circulation of the blood, which then rushes towards the organs, giving them a nutritional filip, and helps to clear arteries. Cold showers are also less drying than hot, are said to make hair and skin healthier, and even encourage weight loss. Which is all very well but of no merit whatsoever if this remains a hypothetical exercise. How about starting off with a warm shower, luxuriating in its steamy loveliness, then turning the temperature down for the last few minutes? Feel the crisp, sharp benefit, then scamper out all-atingle, and wrap yourself in the fleeciest of towels.

"A cold shower can boost mood and circulation, and make your hair and skin healthier"

LARGE BUILDING CLIP, KIKKI-K.COM

### NINE EASY PIECES

Turn your bathroom into a steamy sanctuary with a few carefully chosen things



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9

1 Shower wiper, £44.95, [black-by-design.co.uk](http://black-by-design.co.uk) 2 Arena bamboo shower mat, £55, [black-by-design.co.uk](http://black-by-design.co.uk) 3 Tavistock Kinetic Shower, £595, [purebathroomcollection.co.uk](http://purebathroomcollection.co.uk) 4 Kotra waffle towel, £9; Champa storage baskets, from £35; Amuntai storage basket, £49; Ambon rattan mirror, £69, all [urbanara.co.uk](http://urbanara.co.uk) 5 Supreme bathrobe, £69, [christy.co.uk](http://christy.co.uk) 6 Retro soap dispenser, £15; beaker, £10, [habitat.co.uk](http://habitat.co.uk) 7 Dream shower column, £675, [frontlinebathrooms.co.uk](http://frontlinebathrooms.co.uk) 8 Oak towel rail, £94, [limelace.co.uk](http://limelace.co.uk) 9 Hammam towels, from £15, [loaf.com](http://loaf.com)