

Showers Built for Comfort

Spring brings thoughts of showers, and showers are taking a new direction in bathroom remodels. Homeowners are moving away from metal-framed doors and preferring frameless doors with thicker glass.

What else is new with shower enclosures? According to some bathroom designers, quite a bit is new, starting with the finish. Chrome can still be found in bathrooms, but many builders have moved far beyond chrome, and are including silver, brushed nickel and bronze for faucets, hinges, towel racks and other hardware. The colors and hues of the hardware then can be echoed elsewhere in the room, from the floor and wall tiles to the artwork hung on walls.



Glass choice has taken center stage as well, and frosted and patterned glass are no longer the only choices. Fluted, beveled and etched patterns are options for homeowners desiring more privacy in the bathroom. However, clear glass is definitely the most popular choice for doors, giving the shower stall a larger appearance and increasing the visibility of stylish fixtures and decorative tile work.



Shower doors are changing too. In addition to a frameless option, designers offer many other door styles as well. Single-swing and sliding doors are still popular, but Basco, a leading shower door manufacturer, offers a clear glass model that features two French-style swinging doors.

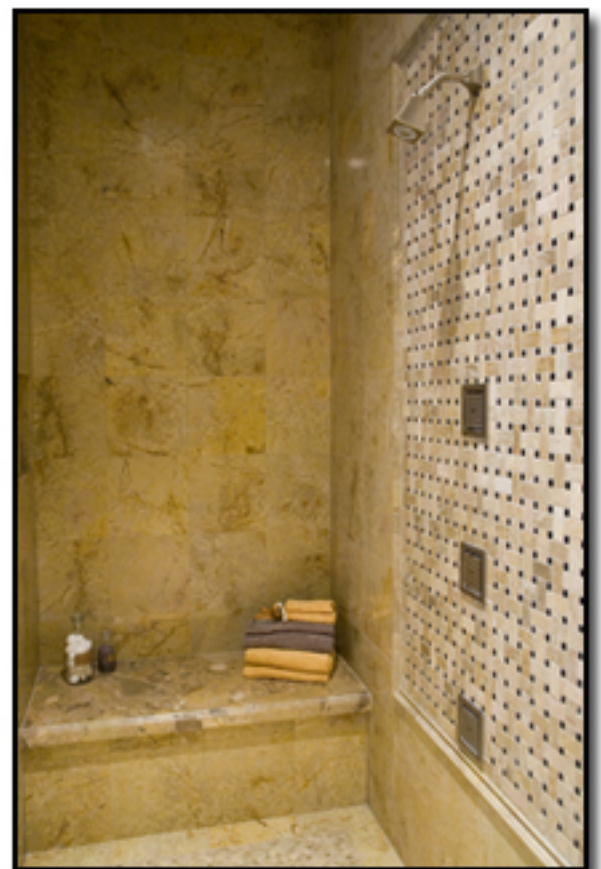
Within the shower enclosure, a bench or a seat provides comfort to a shower and makes up for the lack of the tub. It may also help older homeowners, those with physical challenges, and those planning to age their home.

More luxury can be added with the type of showerhead and jets built into the shower. Fixed showerheads that attach to the wall or ceiling can be replaced easily if they function

improperly or need updating. Newer options include multi-function showerheads with rain-like effects, water pulses or massage spray. Removable hand-held showerheads offer additional convenience.

Steam showers are also popular. These units are enclosed shower stalls with a steam unit included. A shower can be retrofitted by attaching a dome over a standard shower and adding plumbing for a steam unit (about \$800). Another method is to pull out the old shower surround and insert an integrated steam system into a standard tub slot. This can be done for about \$3,000.

A shower spa provides additional luxury with multiple jets in the shower wall that spray water horizontally, while at the same time, water cascades from an overhead showerhead.



Water-efficient showerheads and delivery systems are gaining in popularity as consumers strive to balance comfort with conservation and environmental concerns. Newer showerhead designs have cut water usage by nearly 30 percent, with no adverse effect on personal comfort in the shower.