



## Baths:

Baths are usually available in three main materials:

- Reinforced cast acrylic sheet
- Porcelain enamelled steel
- Porcelain enamelled cast iron

Other materials are also available but they tend to be used in specialist or niche markets. These specialist baths can be made from double-skinned acrylic sheet, copper, resinstone, (sometimes called 'cast stone' ) or gel-coated glass reinforced polyester.

- The most common material used for domestic baths in the UK is reinforced acrylic sheet.
- Enamelled steel baths tend to be used in commercial situations, where extra durability is required, such as in hotels. In mainland Europe enamelled steel baths are more common than in the UK.
- Cast iron baths are very robust but have a much lower market share. Each material has its own features and benefits, strengths and weaknesses.

Whirlpool baths are mainly manufactured from acrylic sheet but they are also available in enamelled steel.

Baths come in a variety of designs. They may be fitted into an alcove, in a corner or in a peninsular situation. They may be freestanding and double ended for use by two. They are available in a range of sizes – the most common are 1600mm to 1800mm long and by 700 to 800mm wide.

The most popular shapes require an additional front and/or end panel which hide the frame, cradles and supports and the plumbing. Panels are available in wood, mdf (medium density fibreboard) or plastic.

This consumer advice gives general information and some guidance to help you choose your new acrylic, steel, or cast iron bath.

## Acrylic Baths

### Features and Benefits

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Benefit</i>
Acrylic bath	Lightweight and warm to the touch. Hardwearing and excellent resistance to staining. Wide variety of shapes and sizes.

## **Checklist: What to look out for/ things to ask about**

### **General Questions to Ask**

- Cleaning – how easy is the product to clean?
- Company pedigree – for how long has the manufacturer and retailer been trading. Is the manufacturer a member of any trade organisation such as the BMA?
- Customer service – what does the manufacturer and retailer offer?
- Guarantee – what length of warranty and what conditions does the manufacturers give?
- Spare parts – what is available and for how long in the life of the product?

### **Acrylic Baths**

- Features- what extra features are provided with the bath e.g. soap recesses, head rest, arm rests, slip resist floor
- Features – are hand grips provided with the bath; included in the price?
- Safety – does the base of the bath have a “slip resistant” surface and what are the manufacturer’s claims for it?
- Thickness: what thickness of acrylic sheet has been used during the manufacture of the bath? Between 3.2 and 8mm is usual. The most common is 5mm thick acrylic.

### **Frequently asked questions**

**Q** What do you recommend for cleaning an acrylic bath?

**A** An acrylic surface is softer than porcelain enamel. Abrasive cleaners will scratch or scuff the surface of the acrylic. Do not use scouring powders or abrasive cleaners. Ideally the surface should be cleaned regularly with warm soapy water. Preferably, the product should be cleaned immediately after use, rinsed with cold water and dried with a soft cloth. If preferred, proprietary bathroom cleaners are available but always follow the instructions on the bottle of your chosen cleaner.

**Q** A friend has told me that aromatherapy oils may affect an acrylic bath. Is it true?

**A** Yes and no. Some undiluted and neat aromatherapy oils left on the acrylic can stain and damage the surface - irreversibly. Oils used in the water should give no problem since they become highly diluted. Bear in mind that other household chemicals such as hair dyes, carpet dyes, paint strippers, strong disinfectants, alcohol, after shave, perfumes and nail varnishes and their removers or bleaches may spoil the acrylic surface of left in contact for some time.

**Q** How do I get a scuff mark out of the bottom of my acrylic bath?

**A** Light scuffing can be removed by careful cleaning with a non abrasive cleaning agent. Light scratches in an acrylic surface may be removed by gently polishing with ‘Brasso’ or ‘T-cut’. Deeper scratches are more difficult to remove and may require a specialist firm with the correct tools and materials. In all circumstances a call to the manufacturer should help resolve your problem.

**Q** I am refurbishing my bathroom in a very old house. The floor is very uneven and I am worried about installing a bath.

**A** Don’t worry. All baths have adjustable legs and feet which should take up the unevenness of your bathroom floor. The bath should then be installed perfectly level.

**Q** My bathroom is really small and has never had a bath in it. What can I do?

**A** Don't worry. Recent and developments in bath design mean that many manufacturers now produce baths of compact dimensions and shape to suit your requirements.

**Q** Why do acrylic baths have a reputation for being wobbly?

**A** An acrylic bath from a reputable manufacturer when installed according to its instructions will be rigid, will not move in use, will not creak and will give a trouble free life. If, however, the bath is installed incorrectly then anything can happen.

## Cast Iron Baths

### Features and Benefits

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Benefit</i>
Cast iron bath	Immensely strong, heavy and durable. Coated with porcelain enamel for a glass-like surface. Mainly traditional shapes – rectangular or roll top free standing.

### Checklist: What to look out for/ things to ask about

- Cleaning – how easy is the product to clean?
- Company pedigree – for how long has the manufacturer and retailer been trading. Is the manufacturer a member of any trade organisation such as the BMA?
- Customer service – what does the manufacturer and retailer offer?
- Guarantee – what length of warranty and what conditions does the manufacturers give?
- Spare parts – what is available and for how long in the life of the product?

### Cast Iron Baths

- Features – are hand grips provided with the bath, and are they included in the price?
- Safety – does the base of the bath have a “slip resistant” surface and what are the manufacturer’s claims for it? ( Not usual in a cast iron bath but worth asking)
- Can the outside of the bath be painted when in a freestanding situation.

### Frequently asked questions

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## Steel Baths

### Features and Benefits

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Benefit</i>
Enamelled steel bath	Rigid and durable and lighter weight than cast iron. Pressed steel with a 'fired on' porcelain enamel (glass-like) coating. Flame proof, fade proof, corrosion resistant. Ideally suited for heavy usage (eg: hotels)

### Checklist: What to look out for/ things to ask about

- Cleaning – how easy is the product to clean?
- Company pedigree – for how long has the manufacturer and retailer been trading. Is the manufacturer a member of any trade organisation such as the BMA?
- Customer service – what does the manufacturer and retailer offer?
- Guarantee – what length of warranty and what conditions does the manufacturers give?
- Spare parts – what is available and for how long in the life of the product?

### Steel Baths

- Features – are hand grips provided with the bath, included in the price?
- Quality - What European Standards does the steel bath meet?
- Safety – does the base of the bath have a “slip resistant” surface and what are the manufacturer’s claims for it?
- Thickness: what thickness of steel sheet has been used during the manufacture of the bath. Between 1.5mm and 4mm steel is used. The thicker baths are heavier and more robust.

### Frequently asked questions

**Q** How are steel baths best cleaned?

**A** Porcelain enamelled products should be cleaned regularly with warm soapy water. They can then be rinsed with clean water and, if desired, dried and polished with a soft cloth. In this way regular cleaning will prevent a build up of soluble salts. Some proprietary cleaners can have an adverse effect on the enamelled surface and we strongly recommend that the instructions on the bottle of your chosen cleaner are followed. Bleach can destroy the gloss surface of enamel and it is essential that it is not used.

**Q** I dropped a screw driver, point first, in my steel bath and chipped a small piece of enamel. Can it be repaired?

**A** Yes. Contact your supplier or manufacturer of the bath. Most good manufacturers can supply you with a small pot of enamel paint which exactly matches the colour of your enamel. Be aware however that the surface is damaged for good and the repair is only cosmetic.

**Q** My porcelain enamelled steel bath has started developing narrow but dark grey vertical lines down one side of the tub? Help please!

**A** Take your wedding ring off when to get into the bath! The chances are that the ring is rubbing the enamel (and the gold is rubbing off your ring.)

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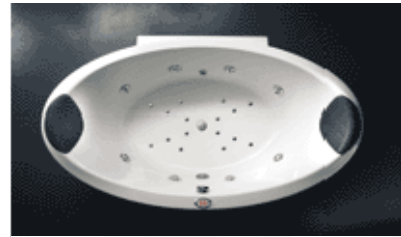
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**Whirlpool & Air Baths**

The whirlpool bath is probably the favourite bathroom appliance for those who wish to add a touch of luxury to their refurbished bathroom.

The whirlpool concept is not new; in fact the use of moving water to invigorate or relax the body is as ancient as the Romans. But in more recent times it was the Jacuzzi brothers who developed the domestic whirlpool bath back in the mid 1950s.



Today domestic 'hydrotherapy' baths go by many descriptions. The most common are: whirlpool baths, jetted baths, hydro pool, hydros pa and airspa baths. Some appliances combine whirlpool with airspa and even chromatherapy (which uses changing coloured lights, under water) to give a relaxing effect.

Some products also include ozone generators to enhance the experience. All, however, are baths which use the vigorous pumping of water and air through special nozzles to massage the body. Systems are available which are as simple or as sophisticated as the budget will allow. Baths are available in reinforced acrylic or enamelled steel.



Most manufacturers now supply whirlpool baths which have self draining pipework and some have disinfection systems which can be used to thoroughly clean the hidden pipes.

**Features and Benefits**

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Benefit</b>
Acrylic bath	Warm to the touch. Manufacturing method allows more exciting shapes
'Air spa' action	Gentle massage. Most suitable for the very young, elderly or infirm
Enamelled steel bath	Robust. Very tough surfaces
Whirlpool action	Massaging, relaxing or invigorating depending on the settings. Warming. Some health benefits
Safety cut out	Will stop the system dead if hair or body parts come too close to the water suction pipe
Chromatherapy lighting	Additional therapeutic effects

## **Checklist: What to look out for/ things to ask about**

- Cleaning – how easy is the product to access for cleaning?
- Cleaning - is the hidden pipework and jetting self draining?
- Cleaning – what system is in place for disinfection of the pipework? Is it an automatic or manual system? Are the disinfection chemicals easy to obtain and what do they cost?
- Company pedigree – for how long has the manufacturer and retailer been trading? Is the manufacturer a member of any trade organisation such as the BMA?
- Controls – what controls are fitted as standard to the bath? Are they electronic touch-pad or manual?
- Customer service – what does the manufacturer and retailer offer to service the whirlpool system?
- Filling controls – does the whirlpool bath come complete with its own taps and fittings or do they need to be purchased and fitted separately?
- Guarantee – what length of warranty and what conditions does the manufacturers give?
- Jets – are the whirlpool jets fully controllable for both direction and force?
- Pipework – is it made from flexible hoses or are the pipes rigid? (rigid pipework is generally accepted to be better.)
- Safety - what safety features are fitted to the bath? Automatic shut down if the inlet becomes blocked?
- Safety - what system is in place to stop the whirlpool system running dry if it is switched on without water in the bath?
- Safety - does the control system have a timer facility and an alarm to wake you up should you drop off to sleep in the bath?
- Safety – does the bath have a water temperature gauge?
- Safety - what electrical safety devices are built into the system? As a very minimum there should be an RCD cut-out device.
- Spare parts – what is available and for how long in the life of the product?

## **Frequently asked questions**

**Q** Do I need any special water supply for a whirlpool bath?

**A** No. Whirlpool baths use a standard hot and cold water supply found in all households. However some manufacturers quote a minimum water supply pressure, perhaps 1 to 3 bar minimum. In such cases an external booster pump may be required to increase the existing household water pressure.

**Q** Are whirlpools noisy?

**A** No, not really. If they are installed correctly according to manufacturer's instructions they should work quietly and efficiently. However there will always be the sound of the pump and of the swirling/rushing/gushing turbulent water.

**Q** Are whirlpools safe for children or elderly people to use?

**A** Children should always be supervised when using a whirlpool bath but all systems will be fitted with safety cut out and timing devices. Some whirlpool systems are fitted with a timed cut out which only allow the user a short period of vigorous massage – this may be particularly suitable for the elderly.

**Q** Do whirlpools baths need specialist fitting?

**A** A whirlpool bath should be installed by a competent and qualified plumber and electrician.

**Q** Are whirlpool baths just for fun or do they have a serious health benefits?

**A** Well you can have fun in them! They are definitely relaxing and they certainly do help you wind down at the end of the day. But they are also designed to give some definite improvements in health. They can help aching joints with the massage effect of the whirlpool jets. They can also help the lymph system, the blood circulation system, arthritis and other ailments. Hydrotherapy is used in hospitals and care homes to help patients.

**Q** I want a whirlpool but my bathroom is tiny. I doubt that I would be able to get a whirlpool system in there. Any ideas?

**A** Many British bathrooms are small but manufacturers have been clever to design and build whirlpool systems which can fit in smaller spaces. For instance if you have room for a standard 1700mm x 700mm bath then you have room for a whirlpool.

**Q** I am pregnant and I have been told not to use the whirlpool. This can't be right, can it?

**A** Well yes - it is correct that pregnant ladies should not use a whirlpool bath. The vigorous action of the jetted water and the heating effect on the body is not recommended. Likewise elderly people or people with a heart condition or high blood pressure should avoid using them.

**Q** I'd love to stay in a whirlpool all day but I have been told this would be dangerous!. Is this right?

**A** New users of a whirlpool should avoid long periods of hydromassage until their body has become accustomed to the therapeutic effects. Timing devices on some whirlpool baths are very useful.

**Q** How should I clean a whirlpool bath?

**A** Whether the bath is manufactured from acrylic or enamelled steel the surface should be cleaned using warm soapy water and should be rinsed and dried after use. If a disinfection system is available it should be used according to the manufacturer's instructions.

**Q** How long does it take to install a whirlpool bath?

**A** Provided that the site is cleared of all the previous installations and the services are fixed according to instructions a whirlpool bath should be installed within a day.

**Q** Does a whirlpool need any special drains?

**A** No. However, drain positioning is important so that the outlet to the bath is close to the drain system.