

Guide to specification for wash & dry (shower) toilets



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Choosing a wash & dry toilet can be a life-changing decision.

Whether the user is disabled or not, inevitably one is cleaned better with a shower than with toilet tissue:- hand:body contact is eliminated with all associated issues of cross-contamination through failure to wash hands etc... The fundamental reason for a wash & dry (shower) toilet is to effectively wash the anal area.

Cleaning with toilet tissue requires manual, mental and physical dexterity, flexibility, and balance. Cleaning with a shower requires only the ability to sit in the right place, and trigger a mechanism.

A wash & dry toilet in essence combines a toilet, bidet and drier in one unit. The toilet cleans and dries the user after use, removing the need for manual cleansing with toilet tissue, and all the associated hygiene and contamination issues. In Japan and the Far East, shower toilets are widely accepted as standard bathroom equipment due to the personal hygiene benefits; variations are widely used in Muslim cultures.



On a business trip to Switzerland in 1959, Manchester-based builder Robert Willan came across a 'fancy throne'. He was fascinated by the concept of personal hygiene it delivered, to the extent he returned to Switzerland specifically to meet the inventor, Hans Maurer. The rest, as they say, is history.

In 1962 Robert Willan founded Closomat in the UK becoming a wash & dry toilet pioneer. Closomat has grown to become the brand leader in an entirely new experience of freshness and cleanliness – the aspirational standard in intimate care and hygiene.

Fundamental considerations

The aim of wash & dry toilets is to provide independence and dignity in toileting, with added benefits of improved personal hygiene, reduced risk of infection and intervention by carers. Some models only provide wash facilities, so the user still has to towel dry.

Therefore the first decision needs to be – what level to choose?

Selection of a wash and dry unit will be influenced by budget, location and length of need.

The cost is not just that of whichever unit is chosen, but what adaptation to the home – if any – will be required to accommodate the unit, and ensure it works, and the length of time it is envisaged the toilet will be needed.

Consideration also needs to be given to the likelihood of the user's needs, initially and potentially changing over time: can they use the toilet as it stands, or will they need accessories? Will needs change with time, requiring the toilet to be modified accordingly?

Location considerations

These toilets require an electricity supply, so new/additional cabling and appropriate fused spurs with RCD/protection may be needed.

If the toilet is being positioned in a bathroom, its proximity to a water source – bath or shower – needs to be considered, and appropriate regulations complied with.

Shower toilets vary from an accessory that bolts on to the existing conventional WC through to state-of-the-art purpose designed wash & dry WC suites that incorporate flushing, washing and drying facilities in one unit. The options are floor-mounted, wall hung and bolt-on. Bear in mind wall-hung units need to have a suitably strong supporting structure – a brick or block wall, or a frame.

User considerations

Whichever option is being considered, the user has to be able to safely get on and off the toilet. This may be conventionally, transfer from a wheelchair, via a hoist, shower chair or lifting device. The toilet seat and its fixings therefore need to be durable and strong enough to accommodate various transfer methods.

Toilet height

The toilet and seat also need to be at a suitable height to accommodate the transfer technique, and then ensure the user is properly positioned and sat back on the toilet, providing support.

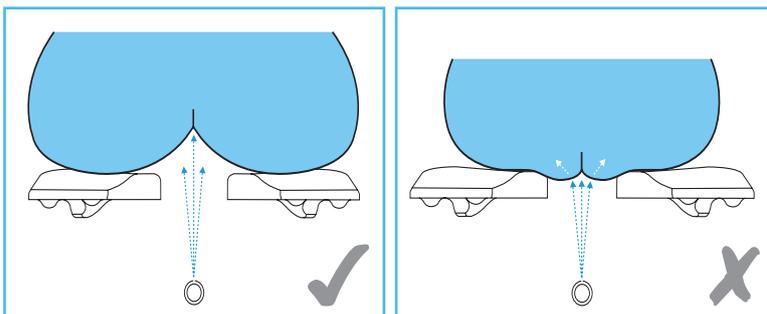
There can be a temptation to raise the height of the unit because the client struggles getting from sitting to standing. If the toilet height is raised too much, the user becomes perched on the edge, affecting their ability to get the spray in the right area, and/or has their feet dangling, affecting their stability and safety. A more appropriate alternative would be to opt for a toilet lifter or shower chair. Some wash and dry toilets can also be specified, or retro-fitted, with appropriate support systems, be it folding arms, paediatric or lateral body supports.

Toilet shape



The human anatomy is a major influencing factor, and the shape of the unit should enable the user to sit comfortably with their back supported against the cistern with their torso and legs forming 90° bends. This gives the most appropriate positioning and enables effective bladder and bowel evacuation without undue strain, and ensures correct positioning over the pan/spray, and provides the user with a comfortable and safe sitting position.

Seat shape/size



The seat needs to be the correct size and shape, especially in bariatric or paediatric situations: buttocks need to be supported and slightly parted, to enable the douche to meet its target cleaning area and not just wash the cheeks. Even standard seats vary in size/aperture opening.

For bariatric users, the toilet seat and hinges need to withstand their weight for use day in, day out, without breaking or collapsing.

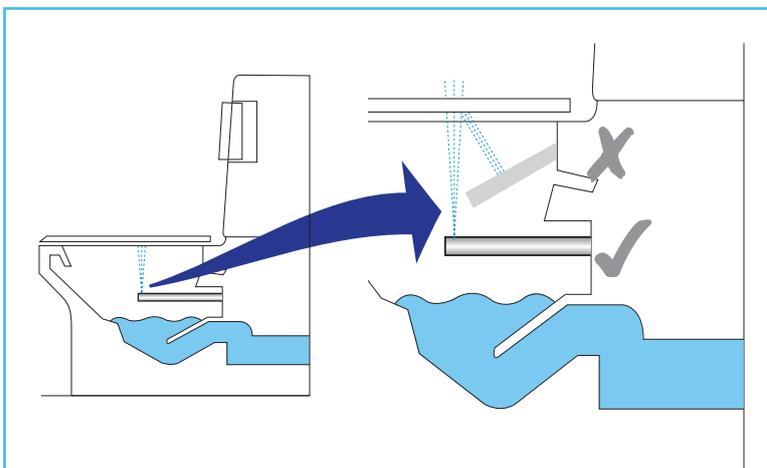
A soft seat may also be an option, to give additional comfort whilst sat. For larger males, an open-fronted seat can help ensure correct positioning for effective cleaning.

Heated seats are available: consideration needs to be given to the need for user protection from bacteria/germs, as any warm/heated environments encourages growth of such micro-organisms.

Douching

The positioning of the douche can be set in most cases to user requirements, to achieve the fundamental aim of washing the user's anal area. Once set, it is not likely to be adjusted unless the user or his/her needs change. The positioning – and angle – of the douche within the pan is set at point of manufacture, and varies from make to make.

Ensure there is adequate clearance between the douche and the user's bottom, for effective cleaning.



The douche position and extension is key to effective washing. A standard douche will achieve good cleansing for most people who can attain a normal seating position. If a 'normal' seating position cannot be achieved, an extended douche arm may be specified. A dual spray version will deliver good cleansing when extra washing is required (eg incontinence, menstrual problems).

The douche spray pattern also varies, and needs to be wide enough to cleanse effectively.

The amount of water also varies: the more water that passes into the douche, the more efficient the clean. Some units use as little as 2l/minute, others up to 8l/min.

Some models include the option to choose and vary the spray pattern and temperature.

Adaptability

People change over time; so do their needs. Someone may only need the features of the toilet short-term. Someone may initially only require the washing function, but may later require additional support, or help getting on and off the toilet, or lack physical strength and/or precision to accurately press a small button.

The flexibility of the wash & dry (shower) toilet, and its ability to be adapted over time to changing needs, if required, plays a major part in the decision process. The toilet design itself can influence its compatibility with additional independent living aids – shower chairs, toilet lifts, support seats etc.

Operation

The user has to be able to easily operate the toilet. Some units have their controls positioned behind and/or to the side of the unit, and/or feature small push buttons. Where bolt-on units are used, conventional flush is to be employed before/after the douching process, which may even require the user getting off the toilet, turning round to flush, then manoeuvring back onto the toilet....

If using the toilet without carer assistance, the user needs to be able to operate it, especially if they have manual dexterity issues, or use a shower chair. Operating accessories can be specified such as a soft touch pad, remote control or infra-red proxy switch.

Flush pads can be used by most users, requiring only hand – or elbow- pressure. If manual strength is limited, a soft touch pad may be more appropriate as it requires little pressure to trigger the flushing and washing processes. Remote controls enable easy operation by a carer; they need good manual co-ordination and strength to ensure the correct button is selected, and to ensure they are held in the hand, not dropped down the toilet pan! Infra-red proxy switches, if properly/conveniently positioned, avoid such considerations, but do require a degree of limb control to ensure they are not accidentally triggered.

Shower chairs

The shower chair may not fit over the toilet, negating one or other's relevance. Even if the shower chair fits over the toilet, full compatibility needs to be verified ie whether the douche be in the correct position to still cleanse the user. The shower chair will limit the user's ability to easily reach the flush/operating mechanism: an operation accessory (infra-red switch, soft touch pad what can be used by hand pressure) should then be specified.

After-care

Lastly, what happens if there is a problem? What back up, service and support is available, and how quickly and easily can any issue be remedied? For most users, a wash & dry toilet is life-changing and part of their daily routine, so repair needs to be as soon as possible.

Once/if the toilet is no longer needed, there may be opportunity for the local authority to 'recycle' it ie have it factory refurbished and installed in a different home, to bring independence to another user without the full capital cost of a new unit, and less waste to landfill.

Closomat

The UK's first, and still biggest-selling, supplier of wash & dry (shower) toilets, Closomat has sold over 55,000 units since it was introduced almost 60 years ago, many of which are still in daily use at least 30 years after first being installed.

Today the Closomat Palma Vita floor-standing wash & dry toilet is the industry benchmark, being the only one of its kind developed specifically for elderly and disabled people.

Uniquely, the Palma Vita is available with a range of accessories that enable tailoring to precise, individual needs. Options include douches, plinths to adjust the toilet height, arm and body support systems, 'soft touch' operation, and a raft of bariatric and paediatric solutions. It is the only wash & dry toilet that can be tailored in this way to individual needs, initially or retrospectively.

The Closomat Lima Vita brings the wash & dry functionality of a Palma Vita, in a wall-hung format.

Closomat also offers a range of compatible accessories, including shower chairs and the Aerolet range of toilet lifters, which replicate the human action of standing and sitting, positioning the user exactly over the toilet if the person has mobility, balance and/or flexibility issues.

The company is unique in delivering in house design advice, supply, installation, commissioning and aftercare service & maintenance through its own dedicated team of engineers.

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