

# SAFER BATHROOMS, SAFER BATHING

## GETTING A GRASP ON GRAB BARS

### GRAB BARS AS A FALL PREVENTION TOOL



falls in older adults happen in the bathroom <sup>1</sup>

Having a grab bar in your bathroom "just in case" can reduce your chance of falling in the bathtub by **75%** following a slip or balance loss <sup>2</sup>



You are **2.5 times** more likely to be injured falling in a bathroom than in any other part of your home <sup>3</sup>



Using a grab bar proactively could reduce your chance of falling in the bathtub by **100%** if you slip or lose your balance <sup>2</sup>



Movements made while bathing can be challenging, especially when the ground is slippery. Grab bars help keep your balance while you bend, turn and twist. <sup>4</sup>



### WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN SELECTING A GRAB BAR

at least  
**900mm**  
(~36") long



When using a grab bar to recover your balance, you might need to grasp higher or lower than you would just standing next to it. A longer grab bar provides the flexibility for different uses and different people.

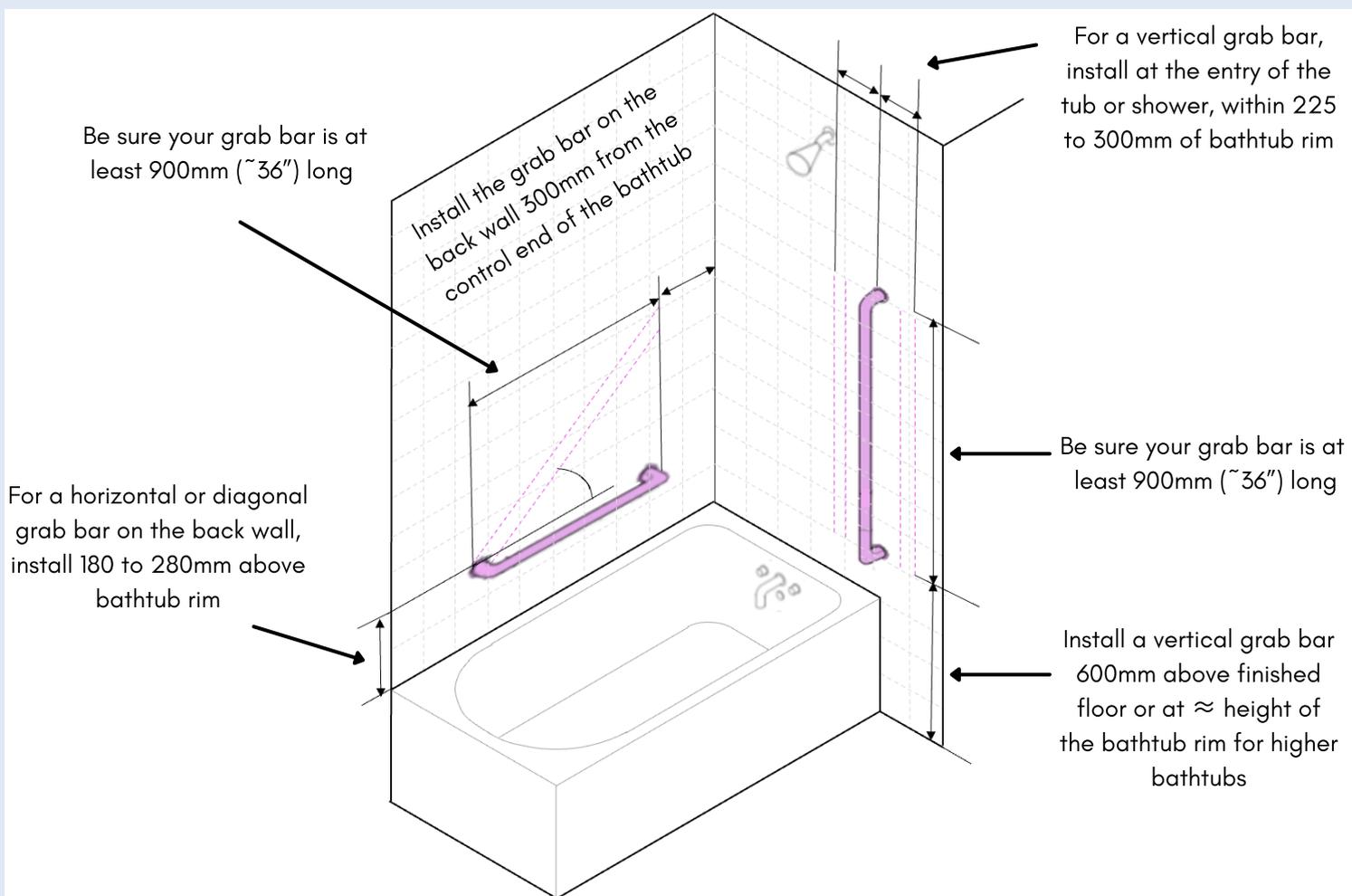
You should be able to fit your hand comfortably around the grab bar so that your fingers almost touch your thumb, or slightly overlap, usually about 32 to 35mm (~1.25- 1.5") in diameter. A good grip is important for recovering your balance. A "power grip" lets you produce effective force to help recover your balance.



Consider a grab bar with a rubber or texturized coating for a more comfortable grip. Texture and rubber coating can keep your hand from slipping along the grab bar, and can help you feel where to grip even if you can't see the grab bar.

# HOW TO INSTALL A GRAB BAR

1. Install a vertical grab bar at the rim of your bathtub or shower to help you get in and out.
2. Install a horizontal, angled or L-shaped bar along the back wall or your bathtub or shower to help you keep your balance while completing challenging tasks like leaning over to wash your feet or sitting on a bath seat
3. A "universal" grab bar installation is shown in the figure below and will meet the needs of most people for safer bathing. Consulting with an Occupational Therapist is helpful if specific needs are required for bathing assistance



4. A grab bar should be mounted securely to a stud. If there isn't a stud where you want to install your grab bar, you may need to install blocking behind your bathtub or shower wall
5. Inspect your grab bar periodically to make sure the fasteners aren't loose, damaged or exposed to water

# OTHER RESOURCES

If you have mobility challenges, a disability, or other concerns, an Occupational Therapist can help find the best grab bar configuration for you. Find an Occupational Therapist at

<https://www.caot.ca/site/findot>

Installing a safe grab bar shouldn't be expensive, although sometimes costs can add up. There are grants, rebates and tax credits that can help.

## **i. Federal Home Accessibility Credit**

<https://bit.ly/3ne9Zmb>

## **ii. Ontario Senior's Home Safety Tax Credit**

<https://bit.ly/3p4Yr77>

## **iii. The Home Renovation Tax Credit for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities**

<https://bit.ly/3aMDWnb>

## **iv. March of Dimes Canada**

<https://bit.ly/3DL0Cks>

## **v. Programme D'Adaption de Domicile**

<https://bit.ly/3ARUd55>

To learn more about preventing falls in the bathroom, supporting safer bathing, or other information about our research contact:

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Collaborating partners:



## References

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