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AUTO INSURANCE RATES How To Avoid Being Taken For A Ride



APRIL 2014 ConsumersDigest.com

Consumers Digest



TOP-RATED BATHROOM FIXTURES

Bathtubs ♦ Whirlpool & Accessible Tubs ♦ Sinks ♦ Toilets
Faucets ♦ Showerheads ♦ Vanities ♦ Medicine Cabinets



Plus

- ◆ Great Stock Picks Under \$25
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Best Buys

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SECURITY SUITES, BACKUP & DATA-RETRIEVAL SOFTWARE



DISPLAY UNTIL APRIL 30, 2014

INNOVATIVE BATHROOM FIXTURES

TAKING IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Top-Rated Bathtubs, Whirlpool & Accessible Tubs, Sinks, Toilets, Faucets, Showerheads, Vanities & Medicine Cabinets



Prices are rising across the board for bathroom fixtures. Although you'll find useful innovations, such as easier-to-clean toilets and spot-resistant faucet finishes, bathtubs are awash in high-tech luxury features that might drain your pocketbook.

By Drew Vass

When it comes to bathroom fixtures, we'd like to tell you that manufacturers have been developing practical innovations. Instead, they've been focusing on luxury, particularly when it comes to bathtubs.

To be sure, practical innovations emerged. More toilets than ever before have configurations that are easier to clean, and more faucets have spot-resistant finishes. However, you also will find innovations that go beyond the practical, including sound-system-equipped bathtubs. Those innovations also come with an increase in price.

Manufacturers tell us that they increased prices for most bathroom fixtures to cover the rise in the cost of raw materials and transportation and a general increase in the cost of doing business. None would cite how much prices have risen. However, our research indicates that prices rose by an average of 5 percent across all categories compared with 3 years ago.

BOWL GAMES. Most of the innovations in bathroom fixtures are among toilets. Now, three manufacturers, Duravit, Mansfield and Toto, make toilets that eliminate the dirtiest part of the bowl: the rim. No more rim means fewer places for grime to hide, thus making cleaning the bowl an easier chore, manufacturers and bathroom designers say.

Toto made rimless models for years, but Mansfield launched its first rimless model in January 2012, followed by Duravit in May 2013. Duravit and Mansfield each has single rimless model; Toto says its newest models, which were introduced in 2012 and 2013, bring that company's total to a whopping 28.

Instead of the water being released under the rim, as in a standard model, the water that's used to flush the bowl of a rimless toilet comes from holes that are positioned on the inside of the bowl.

Mansfield's and Toto's rimless toilets use holes that are positioned along the top of the bowl to create a cyclonic pattern, so water spirals down the bowl surface. Duravit's system has holes at the top of the bowl that stream water in opposite directions. These streams

collide at the front of the bowl and turn downward. At the same time, holes that are along the back of the bowl join in by flushing water downward. Our evaluations confirm that models from all three manufacturers are able to flush the bowl's entire interior surface.

Rimless toilets come in traditional floor-mounted and wall-hung models. If you'd like to go rimless, your least expensive option is \$144. Other toilet manufacturers tell us that they plan to leave their rims intact.

Wall-hung toilets have been around for years as a niche product. These models take up less space than do traditional toilets, because their water tanks are recessed into wall cavities. They also are easier to clean around, because they don't touch the floor, and

✓ Best Buys in Bathtubs

Best Buy Categories

- [P]—Premium selection
- [M]—Midrange selection
- [E]—Economy selection



SEE PAGE 72

Best Buys in bathtubs were selected based on quality of construction, ease of use, range of features and ergonomics.

Accessible bathtubs are higher-than-normal bathtubs that are designed to be easier to access than are traditional bathtubs. Two styles are available: *walk-in* bathtubs, which are accessed via a hinged door, and *rising-wall* bathtubs, which have a side panel that slides up or down.

Color choices might affect pricing. Prices are for a white bathtub.

Best Price is a reflection of the lowest retail price that was available at press time and is subject to change.

STANDARD

[P] Soaking Tub

MSRP: \$1,350; Best Price: \$1,453

>> At 20-3/4 inches before the water reaches the overflow drain, the [redacted] provides the deepest bathing experience of any standard bathtub that we

found. No other model provides as many sculpted features as does this model, including lumbar back support and armrests. Although other models include a sloped back and flat armrests, this model's back and armrests are more contoured.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 71-3/4 in. (l) x 40-1/2 in. (w) x 27 in. (d)
- * Installation: Drop-in
- * Colors: 7
- * Warranty: 10 yrs.

[M] [redacted]

MSRP: \$1,077; Best Price: \$808

>> The [redacted] is a repeat Best Buy selection, because it remains the only bow-shape model that's in this price range. This means that this model's 30-inch-wide bathing area provides more spaciousness than do typical models. This model also has the deepest maximum water depth among midrange standard bathtubs that are less than 18 inches in height.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 60 in. (l) x 32 in. (w) x 17 in. (d)
- * Installation: Three-wall
- * Colors: Almond (beige), Biscuit (off-white), Dune (off-white), white
- * Warranty: 1 yr.



[E] [redacted]

MSRP: \$530; Best Price: \$299

>> With a 13-7/8-inch water depth to the overflow drain, the [redacted] provides the deepest bathing experience of any standard bathtub that we found in this price range. This model also is the only standard bathtub that we found that combines porcelain-enamel-coated steel with a composite backing material. We believe that this construction means that this model retains heat and, thus, maintains water temperature for longer periods of time than do others.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 60 in. (l) x 30 in. (w) x 16-5/8 in. (d)
- * Installation: Three-wall
- * Colors: Biscuit (beige), Bone (tan), white
- * Warranty: Lifetime

ACCESSIBLE

[P] [redacted]

MSRP: \$9,545; Best Price: \$7,159

>> The [redacted] is a repeat Best Buy selection, because it remains the only rising-wall bathtub that meets the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act for its entry panel and is the only chair-level accessible bathtub that we found that provides a lounging-style (reclined) bathing experience. This model's entry panel requires just 5 pounds of force to operate, which makes it easy for anyone to open and to close.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 60-1/4 in. (l) x 24-1/2 in. (w) x 38 in. (d)
- * Installation: Three-wall
- * Colors: Almond (beige), Biscuit (off-white), Dune (off-white), white

the goal still is to use the least amount of water to flush. A few years ago, one conventional (gravity-fed) toilet, Mansfield's Maverick 1.0, was rated at 1 gallon per flush (gpf) for solid waste. That rating typically is reached only by pressure-assist models, which use a pressurized chamber within a toilet's water tank to flush solid waste with less water than a standard toilet requires. Now two other conventional toilets, which Toto introduced in 2012 and 2013, meet the 1-gpf mark. Toto's models start at \$580. No other manufacturers with which we spoke say they're working on such low-flow conventional toilets.

CLEANING UP. Keeping bathroom surfaces clean can be a dirty job, but two manufacturers say they're here to help. Toto introduced two self-cleaning toilets, and Moen introduced anti-stain finishes

on faucets. However, in both cases, experts whom we interviewed are skeptical about the effectiveness of these tweaks.

In April 2012, Toto unveiled a line of toilets that use its ewater+ technology. Toto says its Neorest 550H and Neorest 700H models add an electrical charge to normal tap water, which electrolyzes the water temporarily to increase its cleaning properties (think: mild bleach). The ewater+ feature also appears on two of the company's Washlet toilet seats, which Toto says can be mounted to most toilets. You can expect to pay at least \$1,590 for that seat; a toilet that uses the ewater+ feature starts at \$5,500.

Here's how it works: As you approach an ewater+ toilet, a mist of tap water is sprayed in the bowl; then flushing is followed by a spritz of electrolyzed water. The company says the

electrolyzed water cleans and sanitizes the bowl before it loses its electrolyzed properties.

Six chemists, an expert in water engineering, two experts in biological sciences and an expert in electrolyzed water technology tell us that it's possible that Toto's ewater+ technology creates electrolyzed water. However, they agree that without the addition of a sodium-based powder or tablet, it's unlikely that the electrolyzed water is potent enough to produce any substantial cleaning effect, although it might have some disinfecting properties. Toto confirms that sodium isn't part of the process for its ewater+ feature. No other manufacturer with which we spoke says it's pursuing self-cleaning capability at this point.

Meanwhile, in February 2013, Moen added an antimicrobial finish that in-

Best Buys in Sinks

Best Buy Categories

- [P]—Premium selection
- [M]—Midrange selection
- [E]—Economy selection



SEE PAGE 72

Best Buys in bathroom sinks were selected based on quality of construction and bowl design.

All Best Buys are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, which means that they can be installed at a comfortable work height and can accommodate a wheelchair.

Color might affect pricing. Prices are for a white sink.

Best Price is a reflection of the lowest retail price that was available at press time and is subject to change.

[P] Kohler DemiLav

MSRP: \$482; Best Price: \$361

>>The combination of bowl depth, warranty and available colors makes the DemiLav stand out from competitors. This model is the least expensive cast-iron bathroom sink that we found that has a bowl depth of at least 5 inches. We believe that this model's design, which has curved and square elements, matches well with a broad variety of styles.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 18-1/4 in. (l) x 15-5/8 in. (w)
- * Bowl depth: 5 in.
- * Faucet mount: Deck, wall
- * Colors: 27
- * Warranty: Lifetime

[M] Kohler Ironstone

MSRP: \$387; Best Price: \$377

>>The Iron/Tones is 3-1/2 inches wider than is the typical bathroom sink that's in this price range. Because this model is cast iron, it's more durable than are typical midrange models, which are made of vitreous china. This model also is more versatile than are other midrange cast-iron sinks, because



Kohler DemiLav

it can be installed as a drop-in or an undermount sink.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 24-3/4 in. (l) x 15-5/8 in. (w)
- * Bowl depth: 3-7/8 in.
- * Faucet mount: Deck, wall
- * Colors: 22
- * Warranty: Lifetime

[E] Kohler Simplice

MSRP: \$168; Best Price: \$103

>>The Simplice has the best combination of size and depth of any bathroom sink that's in this price range. This is the only economy sink that we found that has

a combination of contemporary and traditional design elements, which we believe make this model better suited for a wider range of bathroom styles than is any other economy model.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 23 in. (l) x 18-3/16 in. (w)
- * Bowl depth: 3-5/8 in.
- * Faucet mount: Single hole
- * Colors: 11
- * Warranty: 1 yr.

For more information about the above Best Buys, contact the manufacturers directly. See page 66.



you can vary the height at which the bowl is installed. Most models require a minimum seat height of 15 inches and typically go as high as 19 inches; a few have no maximum height.

Wall-hung toilets still are a niche product, but the niche broadened, bathroom designers say, as a result of interest in maximizing a small space and streamlined bathrooms. Three manufacturers—two of which are new to the category—introduced seven wall-hung models in the past 2 years. Duravit in particular went on a wall-hung kick in 2013 by adding five such models to its lineup. The least expensive wall-hung toilet now costs \$325, which is \$55 more expensive than its counterpart of a few years ago.

However, just as the parts of a wall-



hung toilet are hidden, the overall cost of these models isn't plain to see. Because some of its components are hidden inside of the wall, a wall-hung toilet has higher installation costs than does a standard floor-mounted toilet.

According to four plumbers with whom we spoke, replacing a standard floor-mounted toilet with a new wall-hung toilet will cost you, on average, \$573 in labor. That's \$437 more than the labor cost for swapping out a standard toilet with another standard toilet. Swapping out a wall-hung toilet with another wall-hung toilet will set you back about \$235, but plumbers with whom we spoke say further costs might be involved when you switch from one brand or model to another.

When it comes to toilet performance,

* Warranty: Lifetime door seal; 10 yrs. tub; 1 yr. components

[M] *Whirlpool Whirlpool*
MSRP: \$5,158; Best Price: \$3,869
>> At just 3-1/2 inches in height, the threshold of the *Whirlpool* is 2-1/2 inches lower than that of any walk-in bathtub that we found. We like this model's high-arching faucet and matching polished chrome grab handle and lock lever—touches that typically are found on premium models.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 52 in. (l) x 30 in. (w) x 40 in. (d)
- * Installation: Freestanding, three-wall
- * Colors: Biscuit (beige), white
- * Warranty: Lifetime door seal; 25 yrs. tub; 5 yrs. components

[E] *Whirlpool Whirlpool*
MSRP: \$2,800; Best Price: \$2,717
>> The *Whirlpool* is the least expensive walk-in bathtub that we found, yet it includes features that are on models that cost at least \$500 more. These include a handheld shower and a pillow headrest, as well as dual drains that allow water to drain quicker than it does

on typical economy models.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 52 in. (l) x 29-1/2 in. (w) x 40 in. (d)
- * Installation: Three-wall
- * Color: White
- * Warranty: Lifetime door seal; 3 yrs. tub, components

WHIRLPOOL

[P] *Whirlpool Whirlpool*
MSRP: \$2,279; Best Price: \$2,125
>> With 16 jets, the *Whirlpool* whirlpool has six more jets than does any other model that we found. Further, unlike other so-called two-person models, the jets and

ergonomic features that are on this model provide each bather with his/her own pillow and separate back-massaging jets.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 72 in. (l) x 48 in. (w) x 23 in. (d)
- * Installation: Drop-in
- * Colors: 7
- * Warranty: 10 yrs.

[M] *Whirlpool Whirlpool*
MSRP: \$1,336; Best Price: \$910
>> Contoured armrests and a sculpted back give the *Whirlpool* more sculpted features than does any

other whirlpool bathtub that's in this price range. This model also is the least expensive whirlpool bathtub that has eight jets and a lifetime warranty.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 59-7/8 in. (l) x 31-3/4 in. (w) x 19-3/4 in. (d)
- * Installation: Drop-in
- * Colors: Bone (cream), Linen (off-white), white
- * Warranty: Lifetime

[E] *Whirlpool Whirlpool*
MSRP: \$648; Best Price: \$648
>> With 10 jets, the *Whirlpool*, sold exclusively at Lowe's, has four more jets than does any other whirlpool bathtub that's in this price range. This also is the only economy model to combine a lifetime warranty and three-wall-style installation, which is more versatile in terms of how it can be positioned.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 60 in. (l) x 32 in. (w) x 19 in. (d)
- * Installation: Three-wall
- * Colors: Light gray, tan, white
- * Warranty: Lifetime

For more information about the above Best Buys, contact the manufacturers directly. See page 66.



cludes Microban. Faucets that have this finish start at \$191, which is about the same price as similarly styled Moen faucets that don't have the finish.

We've been skeptical for years regarding Microban's efficacy. However, Moen makes no germ-fighting claim about this finish, only its stain-resistant quality. Three antimicrobial experts tell us that they're skeptical of the effectiveness of a Microban finish in preventing stains on faucets.

However, we found promising results from another of Moen's finishes, which was introduced in April 2012. Called Spot Resist, this finish is designed to prevent fingerprints and water-spotting on fixtures that are finished in brushed nickel.

Such technology isn't unique: Several manufacturers say the finishes that are on their fixtures have a stay-clean

effect as well. However, when we evaluated faucets that have Moen's finish, we found that our fingerprints didn't show. Other brands that we touched showed clear evidence of our use. You'll pay for fewer smudges, however. Moen fix-

grudges with smudges

Brands that we touched showed clear evidence of our use.

tures that have this finish start at \$90 for showerheads and \$155 for faucets. Those same fixtures without Spot Resist cost \$79 and \$127, respectively.

WALK-IN STYLE. Two manufacturers, Acryline and Homeward Bath, introduced models that provide a new wrinkle in the definition of an accessible bathtub. (Homeward Bath's parent

company is Steam Planet, which also makes the Northeastern bathtub brand that's sold at Lowe's.)

Accessible bathtubs typically aren't installed like a conventional bathtub is, and they don't function like regu-

lar bathtubs or showers do. (You sit on a seat to bathe and use a hand-held shower.) They also have unconventional looks and incur extra labor costs because of their taller dimensions and plumbing requirements.

None of that is the case with Acryline's and Homeward Bath's new models, which were introduced in 2013. Acryline and Homeward Bath models

Best Buys in Toilets

Best Buy Categories

- [P]—Premium selection
[M]—Midrange selection
[E]—Economy selection



SEE PAGE 72

Best Buys in toilets were selected based on quality of construction, water usage, range of features and style.

Flow rate is measured in gallons per flush (gpf). In cases where models have dual-flush functionality (a full flush for solids, less for liquids), two measures are provided.



All Best Buy toilets have a one-piece design.

Color choices might affect pricing. Listed prices are for models that are white.

Best Price is a reflection of the lowest retail price that was available at press time and is subject to change.

[P] *American Standard Champion 4*

MSRP: \$845; Best Price: \$464

>> No other toilet combines such a wide range of features as does the

Champion 4, which is a repeat Best Buy selection. This model remains the only toilet that we found that has a flow rate of 1.28 gpf for solids, a 16-1/2-inch-high seat that has an elongated design for added comfort and a slow-close seat that has an easy-release mechanism.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 30-3/4 in. (h) x 15-1/8 in. (w) x 29-7/8 in. (d)
- * Seat height: 16-1/2 in.
- * Flow rate: 1.28 gpf
- * Colors: Linen (beige), white
- * Warranty: 10 yrs.

[M] *Champion 4*

MSRP: \$495; Best Price: \$436

>> A combined average flush rate of 1.04 gpm makes the *Champion 4* the most efficient toilet that's in this price range. We like this model's 4-inch trapway, which means that clogs are less likely on this model than they are on other models, which typically have a trapway that's at least 1-1/2 inches narrower. An elongated version, the *Champion 4 Elongated* (\$528), is also a Best Buy.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 30-3/8 in. (h) x 17 in. (w) x 27-1/2 in. (d)
- * Seat height: 16-1/2 in.
- * Flow rate: 1.28/0.80 gpf
- * Colors: White
- * Warranty: 2 yrs.

[E] *Champion 4*

MSRP: \$168; Best Price: \$168

>> No other toilet that's in this price range has such a combination of desirable features as the *Champion 4* does. This model, which is sold exclusively through Home Depot, is the least expensive one-piece,



dual-flush toilet that we found that has a chair-level 17-inch seat height and a lifetime warranty.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 28-1/4 in. (h) x 16-1/2 in. (w) x 29-5/8 in. (d)
- * Seat height: 17 in.
- * Flow rate: 1.60/1.10 gpf
- * Color: White
- * Warranty: Lifetime

For more information about the above Best Buys, contact the manufacturers directly. See page 66.

resemble conventional bathtubs and are installed like a conventional bathtub is. They don't carry the extra labor expenses that are typical of accessible bathtubs, such as modifying the walls and altering the plumbing.

The difference is that Acryline and Homeward Bath models incorporate a door that allows you to walk into a standard-size bathtub instead of having to step over a side. The door, when it's closed and locked, seals to prevent spills, just as in any conventional accessible bathtub. That allows these models to be filled and used as you would a conventional bathtub. At the same time, the full-size height of the door keeps shower spray inside of the bathtub if you use a standard (stand up) shower.

Make no mistake: These bathtubs aren't suitable for individuals who have



Hansgrohe Axor Starck Organic faucet

Best Buys in Faucets & Showerheads

Best Buy Categories

- [P]—Premium selection
- [M]—Midrange selection
- [E]—Economy selection



SEE PAGE 72

Best Buys in faucets and showerheads were selected based on quality of construction, water usage, range of features and style. Showerheads also were evaluated on their ease of use.

All Best Buy faucets are WaterSense-rated, which means that independent testers certified that the

faucets have a flow rate of no more than 1.5 gallons per minute (gpm).

All Best Buy showerhead selections come with a lifetime warranty.

Color might affect pricing. Prices are for models that have a chrome finish.

Best Price is a reflection of the lowest retail price that was available at press time and is subject to change.

FAUCETS

[P] *Delta Faucet Co. Delta Single Levers*

MSRP: \$520; Best Price: \$286

>> At 0.9 gpm, the *Delta Single Levers* has the lowest maximum flow rate of any bathroom faucet that we found. It also is the only model that we found that has an adjustable maximum flow rate, which means that this model can be increased to 1.32 gpm if you prefer a stronger flow to clean your hands. We like this model's elastic silicone nozzles, which we found allow you to remove dirt and limescale by rubbing them with your finger and, thus, eliminate the need for vigorous scrubbing or cleaners.

Features:

- * Handle configuration: Single hole



- * Spout reach: 4-7/8 in.
- * Spout height: 2 in.
- * Finish: Chrome
- * Warranty: Lifetime

[M] *Delta Faucet Co. Delta Single Levers*

MSRP: \$307; Best Price: \$177

>> The *Delta Single Levers* has the best combination of versatility, features and style of any bathroom faucet that's in this price range. This model is the only midrange bathroom faucet that has hands-free operation. It uses *Delta's* *Touch2O* technology, which provide touch and motion-activated control, and also

can be operated traditionally, via its lever. However, most midrange models have a lifetime warranty.

Features:

- * Handle configurations: Single hole, three hole
- * Spout reach: 5-1/2 in.
- * Spout height: 7-15/16 in.
- * Finishes: Champagne (light) bronze, chrome, stainless steel, Venetian (dark) bronze
- * Warranty: 5 yrs.

[E] *Delta Faucet Co. Delta Single Levers*

MSRP: \$82; Best Price: \$58

>> The *Delta Single Levers*



difficulty standing, because they don't include chair-level seats like standard accessible bathtubs do. You sit in them as you would in a conventional bathtub.

Two accessible-design experts tell us that these models work better for individuals who have certain types of disabilities, such as individuals who use a wheelchair yet are ambulatory. Both agree that these bathtubs aren't suitable for those who are wheelchair-bound and possibly not appropriate for those who have limited strength and mobility.

Homeward Bath says its model is an alternative to traditional bathtubs and not necessarily meant for those who have disabilities. "This tub is more so a style choice that provides the benefit of walk-in function," the company says.

Acryline's Twinline combination shower-bathtub carries a price of \$7,425;

Homeward Bath's universal walk-in bathtub with shower screen is \$2,750.

HIGH-TECH WASH. At least two manufacturers aim to bring the portable-spa experience to the bathroom. Consequently, they added sound and surface heat to their bathtubs.

In February 2012, Duravit introduced surface-mounted speakers and a Bluetooth-enabled audio system as whirlpool-bathtub options. The system can be added to 11 of the company's whirlpool models (all but the Architec and D-Code models) for \$1,610. That means that you'll pay at least \$2,210 for a bathtub that has audio features. A bare-bones version of the same bathtub starts at \$600.

Starting in April 2012, Kohler updated and expanded its VibrAcoustic technology from one product to its new

Underscore series of bathtubs, whirlpools and air baths and five other models. VibrAcoustic includes touch-screen controls, a Bluetooth wireless input and additional color LED lighting.

Kohler says VibrAcoustic includes speakers that are mounted to the bathtub's outer surface and cause vibrations in the water, which the company says produces a relaxing effect. Bathroom designers who tried Kohler's bathtub tell us that they could feel vibrations through the water. Prices start at \$3,032 for a standard bathtub that has VibrAcoustic, compared with \$632 for a similar model that doesn't have the technology.

Kohler took the bathroom portable-spa experience a step further by adding optional surface-heat technology to bathtubs when it introduced its Underscore line in April 2012. This in-

Centerset has the best combination of spout height and spout reach among bathroom faucets that are in this price range. We like this model's transitional style, because it matches a wider range of bathroom decor than do other economy faucets.

Features:

- * Handle configuration: Three hole
- * Spout reach: 4-1/4 in.
- * Spout height: 3-1/8 in.
- * Finishes: Brushed nickel, chrome
- * Warranty: Lifetime



SHOWERHEADS

[P] *Homeward Bath Centerset*
MSRP: \$418; Best Price: \$206

>> The *Centerset* is a repeat Best Buy selection, because you'd have to pay \$159 more to buy a bigger showerhead that has the same top-of-the-line features as this model has. This is the least expensive showerhead that includes aerated water flow, which forms bigger water drops. Further, we found that its silicone nozzles allow you to remove dirt and limescale without vigorous scrubbing or limescale-removing cleaners.

Features:

- * Sprayhead diameter: 8-3/8 in.
- * Spray setting: 1
- * Installation: Ceiling
- * Finishes: Brushed nickel, chrome, polished nickel, rubbed bronze

[M] *Centerset*
MSRP: \$191; Best Price: \$106

>> The *Centerset* is the only showerhead that we found that allows you to change its spray settings by pressing one of four selector buttons. We found that this makes it easier and quicker to ad-



just the water flow on this showerhead than it is on any other model that we evaluated. This model also has a winning combination of size and mount options for models that are in this price range.

Features:

- * Sprayhead diameter: 7-1/2 in.
- * Spray settings: 4
- * Installation: Ceiling, wall
- * Finishes: Brushed nickel, chrome

[E] *Centerset*
MSRP: \$72; Best Price: \$72

>> The *Centerset* is the only model that's in this price range that we found that includes an adjustable

arm, which allows you to adjust the height and angle. This model also is 4 inches larger than is any other economy showerhead, which allows more of you to be under the spray. This model's eight spray settings are five more than what most economy models provide.

Features:

- * Sprayhead diameter: 10 in.
- * Spray settings: 8
- * Installation: Wall
- * Finishes: Brushed nickel, chrome

For more information about the above Best Buys, contact the manufacturers directly. See page 66.

novation, which is called Bask, heats the bathtub's surface throughout the back and neck areas, so those surfaces are warm to the touch, no matter what the water temperature is. Kohler says Bask isn't designed to heat or maintain water temperature but merely to provide a warm surface against your

skin. The option starts at \$718 on nine of Kohler's bathtub lines. Models that have both technologies start at \$3,931.

It turns out that the goal of taking your soothing bath to a new level comes with a bit of stress to your wallet. ●

Drew Vass is a regular contributor to Con-

sumers Digest. He has written about a wide variety of home-improvement topics that range from home heating systems and replacement windows to kitchen remodeling.



Go to ConsumersDigest.com to learn more about potential problems that are related to child-size toilets.

Best Buys in Medicine Cabinets & Vanities

Best Buy Categories

- [P]—Premium selection
- [M]—Midrange selection
- [E]—Economy selection



SEE PAGE 72

Best Buys in medicine cabinets and vanities were selected based on quality of construction, storage capacity and style.

We limited our review of vanities to units that are approximately 30 inches wide by 21 inches deep, which is a standard size that fits in a typical 5-by-7-foot bathroom. Vanity prices don't include a countertop, a faucet or a sink.

Listed prices are for the least expensive finish.

Best Price is a reflection of the lowest retail price that was available at press time and is subject to change.

MEDICINE CABINETS

[P] *Aluminum Cabinet*
MSRP: \$882; Best Price: \$585
» The *Aluminum Cabinet* is a repeat Best Buy selection, because it still has the best combination of sturdy aluminum construction, a flexible, modular design and transitional styling of any medicine cabinet that we found. This model's 170-degree door swing still is one of the widest



that's available in a medicine cabinet that has a self-closing hinge.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 30 in. (h) x 30 in. (w) x 4 in. (d)
- * Installation: Recessed, surface
- * Warranty: 1 yr.

[M] *Wood Cabinet*
MSRP: \$200; Best Price: \$150

» The *Wood Cabinet* has the most depth of any medicine cabinet. This model's capability to be recessed or surface-mounted makes it the most versatile medicine cabinet that's in this price range. We like that this model gives the appearance of a framed mirror.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 25 in. (h) x 21 in. (w) x 6 in. (d)
- * Installation: Recessed, surface
- * Warranty: 1 yr.

[E] *Aluminum Cabinet*
MSRP: \$69; Best Price: \$69

» The *Aluminum Cabinet*, which is available exclusively through Home Depot, has more capacity than does any other medicine cabinet that's in this price range. We found that this model's unique two-door design allows you to organize contents better than other designs afford. You can, for example, use the smaller door for easy access to frequently used items.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 24 in. (h) x 24 in. (w) x 4-3/4 in. (d)
- * Installation: Surface
- * Warranty: Lifetime

VANITIES

[P] *Aluminum Vanity*
MSRP: \$1,050; Best Price: \$576
» The *Aluminum Vanity* is unique in that



it has three full-width drawers, which means that no other vanity provides more storage versatility than this model does. We believe that this model's design makes it compatible with a wider variety of interior styles than are other models.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 33-1/4 in. (h) x 30 in. (w) x 21 in. (d)
- * Finishes: Espresso (dark brown), Tobacco (brown)
- * Warranty: 1 yr.

[M] *Aluminum Vanity*
MSRP: \$484; Best Price: \$382

» With its two drawers and one door, the *Aluminum Vanity* has the most versatile storage configuration of any vanity that's in this price range. It also is the only model that has plywood side panels instead of medium-density fiberboard. The latter is more susceptible to water damage.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 33-1/2 in. (h) x

30 in. (w) x 21 in. (d)

- * Finishes: Black, Burgundy (reddish brown), Cinnamon (light brown), Cognac (brown), Java (dark brown), Vanilla (cream)
- * Warranty: Lifetime

[E] *Aluminum Vanity*
MSRP: \$319; Best Price: \$221

» With one door and three drawers, no other vanity that's in this price range has more versatile storage and more places to store small items than the *Aluminum Vanity* does. This model, which is sold exclusively through Home Depot, is the only flat-front economy model that we found that has a decorative toe kick; others have no toe kick.

Features:

- * Dimensions: 34 in. (h) x 30 in. (w) x 21-5/8 in. (d)
- * Finishes: Warm Cinnamon (reddish brown), white
- * Warranty: 1 yr.

For more information about the above Best Buys, contact the manufacturers directly. See page 66.