

# Cleaning Shower Heads

---

Bacteria, mildew and mold (microorganisms) can grow on shower heads over time. Infections can occur when exposed exit sites are showered with water carrying these microorganisms. Exit site infections can progress into **peritonitis** (inflammation of the peritoneum, or the tissue that lines the belly wall and covers most of the organs in the abdomen). Use the steps below to clean your shower head at least once every 3 months to help prevent infections.

## **Step 1: Remove hard water mineral deposits first**

- If you have a removable handheld shower head, get a container large enough to hold the shower head.
  - Fill the container with white vinegar, submerge the shower head and allow it to soak for 10-20 minutes or until the deposits have dissolved.
  - If you cannot remove the shower head, use a plastic bag and fill the bag with enough vinegar to cover the surface of the shower head. Use a rubber band to secure the bag in place.
- If you have a large amount of buildup on your shower head, you may need to add a couple of tablespoons of baking soda to the vinegar. Cleaning products like Lime Away and CLR can also be used instead of vinegar. Tougher jobs may require a longer soak time or a scrub brush to remove the excess build-up.

## **Step 2: Rinse with Water**

- Rinse with water to remove all vinegar on and within the shower head before proceeding to the next step. Rinse the container as well. If you are using a bag, discard after rinsing and use a new bag for Step #3.

### **Step 3: Bleach**

→ Bleach kills most bacteria and fungi, so it is recommended to use on shower heads. Do not use straight bleach. The bleach should be diluted to a 1:100 ratio. For example, add 10 ml (1 tsp) of bleach to 1 liter (1 gallon) of water. Using the same process in Step #1, submerge the shower head into a container or use a new bag secured with a rubber band. Soak for 30-60 min

### **Step 4: Rinse Again**

→ Rinse with water again to remove all bleach residue before reconnecting or using your shower head. Run water for 5 min before showering.

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by Michigan Medicine for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by Michigan Medicine and for which Michigan Medicine does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Author: Rachel Galimberti, RN and Kelsey Danehy, RN  
Reviewers: Vivian Shih, MD

Patient Education by [Michigan Medicine](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License](#). Last Revised 09/2021