

Guidance for Removing and Cleaning a Shower Head

Shower heads require routine cleaning to operate at full capacity. Over time, naturally occurring minerals can build up and block the nozzles (holes) through which water passes. Regular cleaning of the shower head keeps it working properly and allows consistent water flow. More importantly, cleaning reduces the amount of harmful waterborne bacteria (including *Legionella*) on the shower head which you can be exposed to while showering. These bacteria are responsible for illnesses such as Legionnaires' disease. Please follow the instructions below to perform routine cleaning on your bathroom's shower head. The New Jersey Department of Health is not responsible for any damage that may occur. If you're unsure or if your shower head is difficult to service, it's safest to hire a qualified plumber.

Supplies Needed:



Adjustable wrench



Needle nose pliers



Bowl



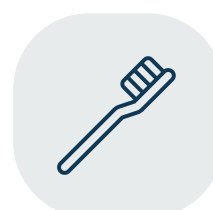
Distilled white vinegar



Thread sealant tape

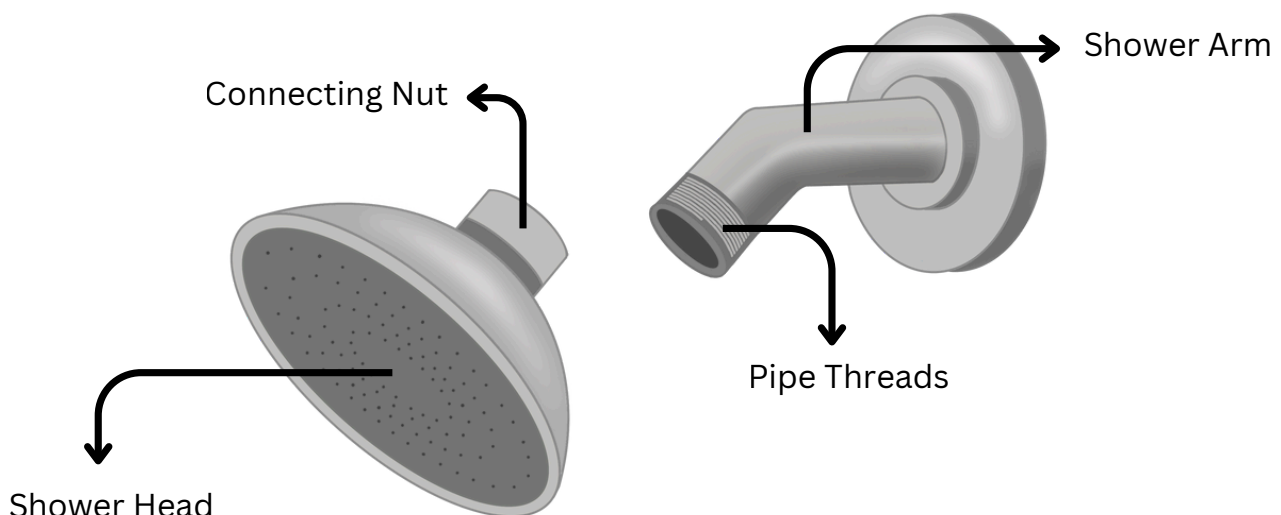


Cloth



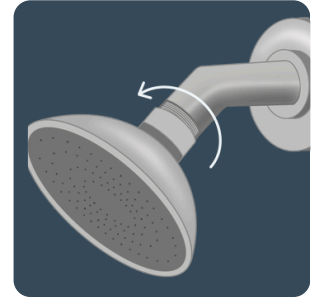
Toothbrush

Components of a Shower Head



1. Remove the Shower Head

First, try removing the shower head by hand. Grip the shower head or the connecting nut, depending on the design of the shower head, and turn counterclockwise to unscrew. If that doesn't work, wrap your shower arm with a rag or cloth and use pliers to hold it in place. Then, use an adjustable wrench to loosen the shower head. You can then unscrew it completely by hand.



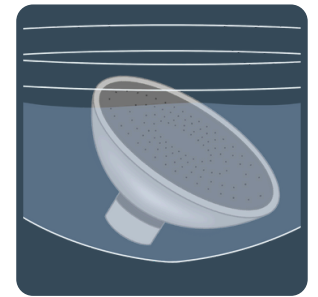
2. Clean and Prep the Shower Arm Thread

Remove any existing thread sealant tape, if previously used on the threaded end of the shower arm. Clean off any visible rust or mineral deposits using a cloth or toothbrush. You should use this opportunity to flush the plumbing with water without the flow being restricted by the showerhead. Turn off the water and completely dry. Wrap thread sealant tape in a clockwise direction two or three times around the threads of the shower arm (or as many times as recommended by the manufacturer). Press the tape into the threads.



3. Clean the Shower Head

Take apart the shower head. If you no longer have the owner's manual, take photos to help you remember how the pieces go back together. Shower heads often have a filter screen inside that can be removed with a pair of needle nose pliers. You can clean the filter by rinsing it with water or using a toothbrush and all-purpose cleaner or dish soap for stubborn, sticky debris. Next, fully submerge the shower head in a bowl of distilled white vinegar and let it soak overnight. Use a needle or straightened paper clip to unblock any holes in the showerhead that are still clogged by mineral deposits. Reinstall the filter screen when cleaned. An alternative option would be to purchase a new shower head and appropriately recycle the old one.



4. Reinstall the Shower Head

Screw on the clean or new shower head by turning clockwise. If the shower arm is not sturdy, you might need to wrap your shower arm with a rag or cloth and use pliers to hold in place when screwing on the shower head. Turn the water on and check for leaks. If the connection does leak, re-wrap the threads with thread sealant tape and carefully tighten again with an adjustable wrench.

