HOMEOWNER REPAIR GUIDE

MAINTAINING CERAMIC TILE WALLS

Around your tub and shower area

WHY GROUT MATTERS

Ceramic tile walls surrounding a tub or shower need periodic maintenance. Cracks in the grout can absorb water, allowing the moisture to penetrate behind the tile and destroy the underlying plaster or drywall. Many of the leaks that appear on the ceiling below a bathroom aren't the fault of a leaking water supply or drain pipe; rather, they are caused by water coming through grout that is in poor condition. To stop these leaks and prevent damage to the walls and ceiling below, you need to repair and seal the grout and then re-caulk the seam between the tile and the tub or shower floor pan.

REPAIRING THE GROUT

1. Start by cleaning the entire area, removing soap scum and mold.
2. Inspect the grout between the tiles for cracks and loose or missing sections.
3. Remove any loose pieces (you can use a hammer and narrow chisel, grout saw, or rotary tool if you have one, but an old flat-head screwdriver will often work), until you get to solid grout.
4. Make sure you have scraped out the joints and brushed out all the chips and dust, so you have a good surface for the new grout to bond to.
5. Then, fill the seams with new grout as needed. Wipe off any excess with a damp sponge after it has set.



Removing loose grout with a grout saw

TIP: SMALL JOBS

For a small job like this, it's probably easiest to use **pre-mixed grout**, available in squeeze tubes or in small tubs; install it with a sponge or grout squeegee.

RE-CAULKING THE TUB SEAM

DON'T USE GROUT HERE

Don't use grout to fill the seam between the tile and the tub or the shower floor pan. The sealant you use here needs to be flexible, to allow the tub to expand and contract. **Silicone caulk** is your best choice.

Scrape the old caulk out of the seam, and then fill it in with fresh caulk.

SEALING AROUND FIXTURES

Faucet escutcheons and tub spouts should meet the wall snugly, so that water cannot flow in behind the tiles. Many plumbers use **clear silicone caulk** around the fixtures to make a better seal to the wall.

SEALING THE GROUT

Let the new grout and caulk cure completely, usually for three days. Then, liberally apply a **grout sealer** (available at all tile stores and most building materials centers) over the entire tile area, and let it set for about an hour. Wipe off the excess sealer, and your shower will be ready for use once again.

Home Repair Resource center

Home Repair Resource Center empowers homeowners to maintain their homes for sustainable and diverse communities.

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