HOMEOWNER REPAIR GUIDE

BATHTUB OPTIONS

In most older homes, you'll find an older bathtub – usually, one that has suffered problems from years of use and abuse. The most common source of porcelain damage is a long-running faucet leak that erodes the finish away and exposes the iron underneath. Another culprit is the use of high-abrasive cleansers, like Comet™, that literally wash the finish down the drain. If you have one of those scarred-up, rusty bathtubs, there are several ways to improve its appearance.



A molded liner fits over the old tub

YOUR THREE OPTIONS

1 REPLACE THE TUB

Your first option is to replace the tub outright. That may mean tearing open the walls in order to get the old one out, and then adapting the walls for a new bathtub. (Unlike older "expansive" models, newer tubs are only five feet long and 14 to 16 inches in depth.) This is a lot of work, and takes quite a bit of time. Moreover, the cost can be anywhere from $1,600 to $5,000, depending on whether you get porcelain-enameled steel (the least expensive material), fiberglass or plastic, or porcelain-enameled cast iron (the most expensive choice).

2 REFINISH THE TUB

An alternative you might consider is to have the tub cleaned, acid-etched and recoated with urethane resin paint. It's generally advisable to hire a professional refinisher, who will fill in any pitted or chipped areas before applying the finish and power-buff the finish so that it shines like a new tub. The tub will be ready for use in 24 hours, and you'll pay far less than the cost of a new bathtub. If you don't clean the tub with an abrasive cleanser or with bleach, the finish will last 15 years or more.

3 INSTALL A LINER

A third option is to hire a company (e.g., ReBath™) that specializes in molding a vinyl liner to fit over your old tub. These companies usually have a variety of old tubs at their facility to use as mold forms. The job can be done in a day; the installers remove the drain covers, glue the liner in place, replace the drain covers, and caulk the joint where the liner meets the wall. Lining a tub costs more than recoating it, but less than the cost of a new fixture.

Regardless of whether you replace your tub or preserve the existing fixture with one of these alternative methods, the new surface will have a longer life if you treat it gently.

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

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