

VANCOUVER BATHROOMS

Bathtub Replacement

Alcove tub replacement, freestanding soaker tub installation, tub surrounds, and bathtub plumbing considerations for Vancouver-area homes

14 Expert Answers from Bathroom IQ

vancouverbathrooms.com/construction-brain

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What are the pros and cons of a tub with integrated apron versus a skirted bathtub for a Vancouver bathroom?

Both integrated apron and skirted bathtubs offer practical solutions for Vancouver bathrooms, with the choice depending on your renovation budget, maintenance preferences, and long-term access needs.

Integrated apron tubs have the finished front panel built into the tub itself, while skirted tubs use a separate removable panel to cover the tub's structural components.

Integrated apron tubs provide a sleek, seamless appearance that's particularly popular in modern Vancouver bathroom renovations. The front panel is molded as part of the tub, creating clean lines without visible seams or joints where water and humidity can penetrate. This is especially valuable in Metro Vancouver's humid climate, where any gaps or seams can become entry points for moisture that leads to mold growth behind the tub. The integrated design also means fewer components to install, which can reduce labor costs during renovation. Most quality integrated apron tubs are made from acrylic or fiberglass with good insulation properties, helping maintain water temperature longer during Vancouver's cool, damp months.

However, **integrated apron tubs have significant drawbacks for long-term maintenance.** If you need access to the tub's plumbing for repairs or maintenance, the only way to reach the drain, overflow, or supply connections is from below or by removing the entire tub. In Vancouver's older housing stock, where cast iron drain lines and aging copper supply lines are common, this lack of access can turn a simple plumbing repair into a major renovation. Additionally, if the integrated apron gets damaged, cracked, or stained, you typically need to replace the entire tub rather than just the front panel.

Skirted bathtubs use a separate removable front panel that covers the tub's structural frame and plumbing connections. This design offers crucial access advantages for Vancouver homeowners, especially in pre-war and post-war homes where plumbing systems may need periodic maintenance. The removable skirt allows plumbers to access the tub's drain, overflow, and supply connections without demolishing tile or removing the entire tub. This is particularly valuable when dealing with Vancouver's aging housing stock, where galvanized supply lines and cast iron drains often require attention during bathroom renovations.

Skirted tubs also offer more design flexibility. The front panel can be finished to match your bathroom's aesthetic — tile, stone, wood, or painted to coordinate with your vanity and trim. This customization option is popular in Vancouver's diverse housing styles, from character homes in Kitsilano to modern condos in Coal Harbour. If the skirt gets damaged, you can replace just the panel rather than the entire tub, making long-term maintenance more cost-effective.

The main disadvantage of skirted tubs is the potential for moisture infiltration at the seam where the removable panel meets the tub rim and floor. In Vancouver's humid climate, these joints must be properly sealed with 100% silicone caulk and maintained regularly to prevent water from getting behind the skirt where it can cause mold growth and structural damage. The removable panel also adds complexity to the installation, requiring proper support framing and careful waterproofing details.

For Metro Vancouver specifically, consider that both options require proper waterproofing at the floor level and careful attention to the tub-to-wall transition. The BC Building Code requires waterproofing behind all tub surrounds, and Vancouver's seismic zone means the tub installation must accommodate minor building movement without compromising the waterproof seal.

Installation costs are typically similar — \$1,500-\$4,000 total including the tub, plumbing connections, and surrounding tile work. Integrated apron tubs may save \$200-\$500 in labor costs due to simpler installation, but skirted tubs offer better long-term value if plumbing access becomes necessary.

Choose an integrated apron tub if you're doing a complete gut renovation with all-new plumbing, want the cleanest possible aesthetic, and don't anticipate needing plumbing access. **Choose a skirted tub if** you're working with existing plumbing, live in an older Vancouver home, or want maximum design flexibility and future maintenance access.

Need help finding a bathroom contractor experienced with both tub types? Vancouver Bathrooms can match you with local professionals who understand the specific requirements of Metro Vancouver's climate and housing conditions.

Q2

Can I install a deep soaking tub in a Vancouver condo bathroom that currently has a standard alcove tub?

Converting from a standard alcove tub to a deep soaking tub in a Vancouver condo is possible but requires careful planning around structural support, plumbing modifications, and mandatory strata approval. The key considerations are weight capacity, drain relocation, and waterproofing requirements specific to Metro Vancouver's humid climate.

Structural and Weight Considerations

Deep soaking tubs hold significantly more water than standard alcove tubs — often 60-80 gallons versus 25-30 gallons for a standard tub. When filled, a deep soaking tub can weigh 600-800 pounds compared to 300-400

pounds for a standard tub. Most Vancouver condo floors built after 1990 can handle this additional weight, but older buildings may require structural assessment. The floor joists and subfloor must support not just the tub weight but also the dynamic load of water movement and occupants.

If you're considering a freestanding soaking tub, the weight distribution changes completely. Freestanding tubs concentrate their weight on four small feet rather than distributing it across the entire tub footprint like an alcove installation. This may require additional floor reinforcement or a structural engineer's assessment, especially in older concrete buildings where the slab thickness varies.

Plumbing Modifications and Drainage

Most deep soaking tubs require drain relocation since they're typically positioned differently than standard alcove tubs. Moving the drain means breaking into the concrete slab (common in Vancouver condos) and rerouting the drain line — work that requires a licensed plumber and building permits. The existing drain location may not accommodate the new tub's drain position, especially with freestanding models positioned away from walls.

Deep soaking tubs also require larger drain lines to empty efficiently. Standard tubs use 1.5-inch drains, while deep soaking tubs often need 2-inch drains to prevent lengthy emptying times. Upgrading the drain size requires plumbing rough-in work and may affect the drain stack serving other units — a significant consideration in condo buildings.

Waterproofing in Vancouver's Climate

Metro Vancouver's persistent humidity makes waterproofing absolutely critical around any tub installation. Deep soaking tubs create more splash and humidity than standard tubs, requiring enhanced waterproofing on surrounding walls and floors. If the tub installation involves removing existing tile or drywall, you'll need a complete Schluter Kerdi waterproofing system or equivalent behind any new tile work.

The area around a freestanding tub requires careful waterproofing since water can splash in all directions. Unlike alcove tubs that are contained on three sides, freestanding installations need waterproof flooring extending well beyond the tub footprint and proper drainage to prevent water from reaching adjacent rooms or units below.

Strata Approval Requirements

Condo bathroom renovations in Metro Vancouver require written strata council approval before any work begins. Deep soaking tub installations typically involve plumbing modifications, potential structural changes, and waterproofing work that affects the building envelope — all requiring strata approval. You'll need to submit detailed renovation plans showing the new tub location, plumbing changes, waterproofing specifications, and contractor insurance documentation.

Most strata corporations require proof that the renovation won't compromise waterproofing or affect neighbouring units. Since deep soaking tubs create more humidity and potential for water damage, some strata councils may require enhanced waterproofing documentation or even a waterproofing warranty from your contractor.

Practical Installation Considerations

Access is often challenging in Vancouver condos. Deep soaking tubs are larger and heavier than standard tubs, requiring careful planning for delivery through hallways, elevators, and doorways. Some freestanding tubs may not fit through standard doorways and require removal of door frames or even windows for installation.

The existing bathroom layout affects feasibility. If your current alcove tub area can accommodate a deep soaking tub of similar dimensions, the project is more straightforward. However, if you want a larger soaking tub or freestanding model, you may need to reconfigure the entire bathroom layout, potentially affecting the toilet and vanity locations.

Cost Expectations

Deep soaking tub installations in Vancouver condos typically cost \$8,000-\$25,000 depending on the tub selection, plumbing modifications required, and finish level. Freestanding soaking tubs range from \$1,500-\$8,000 for the tub itself, while installation including plumbing rough-in, waterproofing, and flooring typically adds \$5,000-\$15,000. Alcove-style deep soaking tubs are generally less expensive to install since they use the existing tub location.

When to Hire Professionals

This project requires a licensed plumber for any drain modifications and a waterproofing specialist familiar with Vancouver's climate conditions. Most contractors experienced in Vancouver condo renovations can handle the strata approval process and coordinate the various trades required. Always verify WorkSafeBC coverage and strata-required insurance levels before work begins.

Need help finding a bathroom contractor experienced with Vancouver condo renovations? Vancouver Bathrooms can match you with professionals familiar with strata requirements and deep soaking tub installations.

Q3

What is the best bathtub option for a bathroom where resale value matters in Vancouver's competitive housing market?

For maximum resale value in Vancouver's competitive market, a clean white alcove bathtub (acrylic or fiberglass) in good condition consistently appeals to the broadest range of buyers, while freestanding

soaker tubs can add significant value in higher-end homes but may limit buyer appeal in smaller bathrooms.

The Vancouver housing market rewards bathroom renovations that feel fresh, clean, and move-in ready. Most buyers want to see a functional bathtub option, especially families with young children, but they don't want to inherit someone else's highly personal design choices. A standard alcove tub allows buyers to envision their own style preferences while providing the practical bathing solution most households need.

Alcove tubs offer the best resale value because they maximize bathroom space efficiency — critical in Vancouver's typically compact bathrooms, especially in older homes throughout Kitsilano, East Vancouver, and Burnaby. A quality acrylic alcove tub (\$600-\$1,200) with a tile or solid surface surround creates a clean, timeless look that photographs well for MLS listings and appeals to buyers across all age groups. The key is ensuring the tub looks current — avoid dated colors like almond or bone, and ensure the surrounding tile and fixtures feel cohesive and updated.

Freestanding soaker tubs can add substantial value in the right context — specifically in master bathrooms over 80 square feet where the tub becomes a luxury focal point rather than competing for space with other fixtures. In higher-end Vancouver neighborhoods (West Vancouver, Kerrisdale, South Surrey), a well-positioned freestanding tub signals spa-like luxury that buyers expect at certain price points. However, freestanding tubs require significant floor space and often necessitate relocating plumbing, adding \$2,000-\$4,000 to installation costs.

Metro Vancouver's housing stock influences the best choice. In pre-war character homes with larger bathrooms, a clawfoot or modern freestanding tub can enhance the home's period charm while providing modern luxury. In post-war homes and condos with smaller bathrooms, maximizing space with a sleek alcove tub and glass shower door creates the open, bright feeling Vancouver buyers prefer. Condo bathrooms particularly benefit from space-efficient solutions since most Metro Vancouver condos have compact bathroom layouts.

Avoid these resale-limiting choices: colored tubs (harvest gold, avocado, pink) that date the bathroom, oversized corner tubs that dominate small spaces, jetted tubs that many buyers view as maintenance-heavy and unhygienic, and any tub installation that eliminates the shower function entirely. Vancouver's active lifestyle means most buyers want both bathing and showering options.

Consider your neighborhood and price point. In family-oriented areas like Richmond, Coquitlam, and Surrey, functional alcove tubs appeal to buyers with children. In urban condos and higher-end markets, a luxurious shower with a separate soaking tub (if space permits) maximizes appeal. The key is matching the bathroom's luxury level to the home's overall market position — a \$60,000 bathroom renovation in a \$800,000 home may not return the investment, while a \$25,000 bathroom that feels fresh and current typically adds \$30,000-\$40,000 in perceived value.

Professional installation is crucial for resale value. Buyers notice poor workmanship, uneven tile, inadequate waterproofing signs, and fixtures that don't feel solidly installed. A properly installed alcove tub with quality tile surround and modern fixtures signals to buyers that the bathroom was renovated correctly and won't require immediate attention.

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Should I choose a centre drain or end drain bathtub for my Vancouver bathroom renovation?

Centre drain bathtubs offer better soaking comfort and flexibility for most Vancouver bathroom layouts, while end drains work better in tight spaces or when you need to maximize floor space around the tub. The choice depends on your bathroom size, plumbing location, and how you plan to use the tub.

Centre drain bathtubs position the drain in the middle of the tub bottom, creating a natural basin shape that's more comfortable for soaking. Your body naturally settles into the centre, and both ends of the tub are equally deep. This design works well for freestanding tubs, larger alcove installations, and when you have flexibility in drain placement. Centre drains are ideal if you're doing a complete bathroom gut renovation where the plumber can relocate the drain to the optimal position.

End drain bathtubs have the drain at one end (usually the foot end), creating a sloped bottom that's deeper at the drain end and shallower at the other. This design maximizes usable length and works better in narrow bathroom layouts common in Vancouver's older homes. End drains are often the practical choice when you're replacing an existing tub in the same location, as most existing Vancouver bathrooms have end drain rough-ins.

Metro Vancouver housing considerations play a significant role in this decision. Pre-war Vancouver homes (Kitsilano, Main Street, East Vancouver) often have small bathrooms with existing end drain plumbing that would be expensive to relocate. Moving a drain requires breaking into the floor, potentially dealing with cast iron drain piping, and ensuring proper slope to the main drain line. In these homes, an end drain tub that uses the existing plumbing location typically saves \$800-\$2,000 in plumbing costs.

Newer suburban homes across Burnaby, Surrey, Coquitlam, and Richmond often have more bathroom space and ABS drain piping that's easier to modify. If you're doing a complete renovation, relocating the drain for a centre drain tub is more feasible and the cost difference is smaller.

Practical installation factors matter significantly in Vancouver's seismic zone. Both drain types require proper support and blocking, but freestanding centre drain tubs need additional floor reinforcement to handle the concentrated weight. Wall-mounted tub fillers common with freestanding tubs require blocking that meets seismic requirements for heavy fixtures.

Cost considerations in Metro Vancouver: Standard alcove tubs (typically end drain) cost \$400-\$1,500 installed. Freestanding centre drain tubs range from \$1,000-\$5,000 plus installation costs of \$2,500-\$8,000 including plumbing modifications, floor reinforcement, and drain relocation if needed.

When to hire a professional: Any drain relocation requires a licensed plumber, and moving drains in older Vancouver homes often reveals surprises like corroded cast iron piping or inadequate floor support. A bathroom renovation contractor can assess your existing plumbing and recommend the most cost-effective approach for your specific situation.

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Q5

Is a freestanding soaker tub or a built-in bathtub better for a Vancouver master bathroom?

A freestanding soaker tub creates a stunning visual centerpiece and works beautifully in master bathrooms with at least 55–60 square feet of usable floor space, while a built-in (alcove or drop-in) tub makes better practical use of space and is typically easier and less expensive to install. The right choice depends on your bathroom's size, your plumbing layout, your budget, and how you actually use the tub.

Freestanding soaker tubs are the aspirational choice in Metro Vancouver master bathroom renovations right now, and for good reason — they look spectacular. A well-placed freestanding tub becomes the focal point of the room, creating a spa-like atmosphere that homeowners love. However, they come with practical considerations that many homeowners overlook. A freestanding tub requires **finished walls and flooring on all sides**, which increases tile and finishing costs compared to a three-wall alcove tub. The drain location must be centred under the tub, which often requires relocating the existing drain — a plumbing modification that requires a licensed plumber and a plumbing permit. In Metro Vancouver, freestanding soaker tubs range from \$1,000–\$5,000+ for the tub itself, with

installed costs of \$2,500–\$8,000 including plumbing, drain relocation, and a freestanding tub filler faucet (\$400–\$2,000 for the faucet alone).

One important consideration specific to Metro Vancouver's housing stock is **floor structure**. A freestanding soaker tub filled with water and occupied by an adult can weigh 700–1,000 pounds or more, and this weight is concentrated on a smaller footprint than a built-in tub that distributes load across a three-wall frame. In wood-frame homes — which make up the vast majority of Metro Vancouver's residential housing — the floor joists beneath the tub location should be assessed for adequacy. Homes built before the 1980s may need sistered joists or additional support. This is particularly relevant for second-floor master bathrooms, where the weight transfers to the structure below.

Built-in alcove tubs remain the practical workhorse of Vancouver bathrooms. They fit neatly into a three-wall recess, typically 60 inches long by 30–32 inches wide, and are far less expensive — \$400–\$1,500 for the tub, with installed costs of \$1,500–\$4,000 including plumbing connections. Because the tub sits against three walls, waterproofing is straightforward with a standard tub surround of tile or acrylic panels. Alcove tubs are also easier to combine with a shower — if anyone in the household ever uses the tub for showering, a built-in tub with a shower valve and curtain rod or glass panel is far more functional than a freestanding tub.

Drop-in tubs offer a middle ground — the soaking depth and comfort of a freestanding tub with the space efficiency of a built-in. They sit inside a framed deck, typically tiled to match the bathroom. Drop-in installations cost \$2,000–\$6,000 including the deck framing, waterproofing, and tile finishing. They work well in larger master bathrooms where the homeowner wants a soaking tub but does not have the floor space for a true freestanding installation with clearance on all sides.

For **condos and strata properties** across Metro Vancouver, freestanding tubs add a complication: strata councils typically require detailed waterproofing plans for any bathroom renovation, and a freestanding tub with an exposed floor drain connection is scrutinized more carefully than a standard alcove tub with proven waterproofing assemblies. Some strata corporations have specific requirements for waterproofing under freestanding tubs, including waterproof membrane extending across the entire bathroom floor — not just the shower area.

In Vancouver's climate, where mould prevention is the number one bathroom concern, consider how accessible the space around and behind the tub will be for cleaning and inspection. Freestanding tubs allow easy access to all sides for cleaning — a genuine advantage in a humid environment. Built-in tubs, by contrast, can develop hidden mould in the enclosed space behind the tub apron if the area is not properly sealed and ventilated.

Practically speaking, if your master bathroom is under 50 square feet, a built-in alcove or drop-in tub is almost certainly the better choice. If you have 60 square feet or more and the budget to relocate plumbing, a freestanding soaker tub can transform the space into something truly special. Either way, ensure your bathroom has adequate

ventilation — a minimum 80 CFM exhaust fan ducted to the exterior — because a soaking tub generates significant steam and moisture that must be actively removed in Metro Vancouver's already humid climate.

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Q6

How do I choose between an alcove and a drop-in tub for my Vancouver bathroom renovation?

An alcove tub is the practical, budget-friendly choice for standard bathrooms where the tub fits into a three-wall recess, while a drop-in tub offers a more luxurious soaking experience and custom aesthetic but requires a built surround deck and more bathroom space. Your decision should come down to bathroom size, budget, whether you need a shower function, and the overall design direction of your renovation.

Alcove tubs are the most common bathtub style in Metro Vancouver homes and the most economical to install. They are designed to fit into a standard 60-inch-long, three-wall enclosure with one finished apron facing the room. The tub sits on the subfloor, the three surrounding walls get waterproofed and tiled (or fitted with an acrylic surround), and the installation is relatively straightforward. In Metro Vancouver, an alcove tub costs \$400–\$1,500 for the unit itself and \$1,500–\$4,000 fully installed with plumbing connections, waterproofing, and a tile or acrylic surround. The major advantage of an alcove tub is its compatibility with a showerhead — the vast majority of alcove tub installations include a shower valve, making the tub do double duty. For households where the bathtub also serves as the primary shower, this is the clear winner.

Alcove tubs come in a range of materials. **Acrylic** is the most popular — lightweight, warm to the touch, available in many shapes, and priced from \$400–\$1,000. **Enamelled steel** is the budget option at \$200–\$500 but feels cold, is noisy when filling, and chips more easily. **Cast iron with enamel** is the premium alcove option at \$800–\$2,500 —

extremely durable, excellent heat retention, but very heavy (300–400 pounds), which matters in second-floor installations in Vancouver's wood-frame homes.

Drop-in tubs are designed to be lowered into a framed and finished surround deck, leaving the rim of the tub flush with or slightly below the deck surface. The deck is typically framed with 2x4s, sheathed with cement backer board, and finished with tile — often the same tile used on the bathroom floor or shower walls for a cohesive look. This creates a built-in, custom appearance that looks more upscale than an alcove installation. Drop-in tubs range from \$500–\$3,000 for the tub, with the total installed cost — including deck framing, cement board, waterproofing, tile finishing, and plumbing — running \$2,500–\$6,500.

The trade-off with drop-in tubs is **space and cost**. The surrounding deck adds 6–12 inches to the footprint of the tub on each side where a deck exists, meaning a drop-in installation typically requires a bathroom that is at least 8–10 square feet larger than what you would need for an alcove tub. In many Metro Vancouver bathrooms — especially in condos built in the 1990s–2000s where bathrooms average 40–55 square feet — there simply is not enough room for a drop-in deck without sacrificing essential clearance around the toilet or vanity.

From a **waterproofing perspective**, both styles require careful attention in Vancouver's humid climate. Alcove tubs need a waterproof membrane on all three walls above the tub lip, extending at least 6 inches above the showerhead height if a shower is included. Drop-in tubs need waterproofing on the deck surface and all joints where the tub rim meets the tile. The BC Building Code mandates waterproofing in all wet areas, and in Metro Vancouver's 1,200+ millimetres of annual rainfall and 75–85% ambient humidity, any gap in waterproofing becomes a mould incubator within months.

One practical consideration often overlooked: **access for future plumbing repairs**. Alcove tubs with a removable front apron or an access panel on the plumbing wall allow a plumber to reach the drain and overflow assembly without demolishing tile. Drop-in tubs, if the deck does not include an access panel, can require tearing out tile and deck framing to reach a leaking drain — a \$1,000–\$3,000 repair that could be a \$200 fix with proper access. Insist on an access panel in any drop-in tub installation.

For most Metro Vancouver bathroom renovations, the alcove tub remains the practical choice — it fits standard spaces, costs less, combines with a shower function, and is easier to maintain and repair. Choose a drop-in tub if you have the space, the budget, and the design vision for a dedicated soaking tub in a master bathroom where a separate shower handles daily bathing.

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Can I replace my old cast iron bathtub without damaging the floor in a Vancouver character home?

Yes, you can replace an old cast iron bathtub without damaging the floor in a Vancouver character home, but it requires careful planning, experienced tradespeople, and realistic expectations about what you will find underneath. Cast iron tubs in Vancouver's pre-war and early post-war character homes (built roughly 1900–1960) typically weigh 250–400 pounds empty and have been sitting in place for 60–120 years, so removal is a significant undertaking.

The first step is **disconnecting the plumbing**. The drain and overflow assembly on old cast iron tubs is often original — corroded brass or galvanized fittings that may not unthread cleanly. A licensed plumber should handle this disconnection because forcing corroded fittings risks cracking the cast iron drain shoe or damaging the drain piping below the floor. In many Vancouver character homes, the drain piping is original cast iron as well, and breaking a corroded fitting can crack the drain stack, turning a bathtub swap into a \$3,000–\$8,000 drain pipe replacement.

Removing the tub is the critical phase for floor protection. Cast iron tubs are too heavy for most homeowners to safely manoeuvre, and dragging a 300-pound tub across a hardwood or tile floor will gouge and scratch everything in its path. Professional bathroom contractors in Metro Vancouver typically use one of two approaches: **slide the tub onto furniture dollies or moving blankets** and carefully roll it out of the bathroom and through the house, or **break the tub in place** using a sledgehammer or reciprocating saw with a metal-cutting blade. Breaking the tub in place sounds dramatic, but it is often the safest option for protecting floors and doorframes. The tub is covered with a heavy tarp or moving blankets, then struck with a sledgehammer — cast iron shatters into manageable pieces rather than deforming. The pieces are carried out individually, avoiding the risk of a 300-pound tub tipping in a narrow hallway and crashing through a character home's original fir floor.

Protecting the floor during removal involves **laying down 1/4-inch hardboard or plywood sheets** along the entire path from bathroom to exit door, taped at the seams. Cardboard alone is not sufficient — it tears under the weight and concentrated edges of a cast iron tub. Budget \$100–\$300 for floor protection materials and expect the removal process to take 2–4 hours with a two-person crew.

What you will find under the tub is often the biggest variable. Character homes in Kitsilano, Main Street, Mount Pleasant, Dunbar, and East Vancouver frequently reveal surprises when the old tub comes out: original fir subfloor that may be water-damaged or rotted around the drain area, old lead drain pipes that should be replaced with modern ABS, galvanized supply lines that are corroded and restricted, and sometimes knob-and-tube electrical wiring running through the floor or wall cavities. Any water damage to the subfloor must be repaired before the new

tub goes in — soft or rotted subfloor cannot support a new bathtub. Subfloor repair in a tub area typically costs \$300–\$800 depending on the extent of damage.

If the character home was built before 1990, there is also the question of **asbestos**. Floor tiles, the adhesive under vinyl flooring, pipe insulation, and even some plaster and drywall compounds from this era can contain asbestos. Before disturbing any flooring or wall material during the tub removal, have suspect materials tested by an accredited lab. Asbestos testing costs \$30–\$50 per sample, and professional abatement, if needed, adds \$1,500–\$5,000 to the project.

The **total cost to remove an old cast iron tub and install a new one** in a Vancouver character home ranges from \$2,500–\$6,000 for a straightforward swap (same location, no subfloor damage, no plumbing relocation) to \$6,000–\$15,000 if subfloor repair, drain pipe replacement, supply line upgrades, and asbestos abatement are involved. Getting a plumber to assess the existing plumbing condition before committing to a scope of work is highly recommended — a \$200–\$300 assessment can prevent budget surprises once demolition reveals hidden conditions.

This is not a DIY project. The weight of the tub, the risk of damaging original floors and door frames, the plumbing disconnection, and the potential for asbestos and structural surprises all warrant hiring an experienced bathroom contractor with character home renovation experience.

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Q8

What is the best bathtub material for Vancouver's climate and water quality?

Acrylic is the best all-around bathtub material for Metro Vancouver's climate and water conditions, offering the ideal combination of moisture resistance, warmth, lightweight installation, and durability in a humid marine environment. That said, each material has strengths worth understanding depending on your budget, design preferences, and how the tub will be used.

Acrylic dominates the Metro Vancouver bathtub market for good reason. It is non-porous, which means it does not absorb moisture — a critical advantage in a city that receives over 1,200 millimetres of rainfall annually with year-round ambient humidity of 75–85%. Acrylic is warm to the touch when you step in (unlike steel or cast iron, which feel cold until the hot water warms them), it is lightweight at 60–100 pounds (making it easy to install in second-floor bathrooms in wood-frame homes without structural concerns), and it resists mould and mildew growth on its surface. Scratches and minor damage can be repaired with acrylic buffing compound. Metro Vancouver pricing for acrylic tubs ranges from \$400–\$1,500 for alcove models and \$1,000–\$4,000 for freestanding soakers.

The main drawback of acrylic is that it flexes slightly underfoot, which some homeowners find unsettling. Higher-quality acrylic tubs are reinforced with fibreglass backing to reduce this flex. When shopping, press firmly on the bottom of the tub in the showroom — a well-made acrylic tub should feel solid, not springy.

Cast iron with porcelain enamel is the premium traditional choice and what you will find in many of Vancouver's character homes built before 1960. Cast iron tubs are virtually indestructible, with a glass-smooth enamel surface that resists stains, scratches, and chemicals. They retain heat exceptionally well — a cast iron tub keeps bathwater warm 10–15 minutes longer than acrylic. The enamel surface is non-porous and naturally resistant to mould growth. However, cast iron is extremely heavy (300–400 pounds for a standard 60-inch tub), which creates structural considerations for second-floor installations in Vancouver's predominantly wood-frame housing stock. Floor joists may need reinforcement, adding \$500–\$2,000 to the project. Cast iron tubs cost \$800–\$2,500 for alcove models and \$2,000–\$8,000+ for freestanding clawfoot or slipper styles.

Enamelled steel is the budget option at \$200–\$500 for a standard alcove tub. It is lighter than cast iron but heavier than acrylic, with a durable enamel surface. The disadvantages are significant for Vancouver: steel tubs are cold to the touch, noisy when filling with water, and if the enamel chips (which happens more easily than with cast iron), the exposed steel rusts quickly in Vancouver's humid bathroom environment. A rust spot on a steel tub in Metro Vancouver's climate can grow from a pinpoint chip to a visible stain within months. Steel tubs are a reasonable choice for a rental property or ultra-budget renovation but are not ideal for a primary bathroom where you want longevity.

Engineered stone and solid surface materials (like Quartz and Corian composite tubs) are the luxury end of the market at \$3,000–\$10,000+. They are non-porous, mould-resistant, available in matte finishes that look striking in modern bathrooms, and retain heat well. These materials perform beautifully in Vancouver's climate because they are completely impervious to moisture. The weight is substantial (200–500 pounds depending on size), so floor

structure assessment is necessary for upper-floor installations.

Vancouver's water quality is another factor worth considering. Metro Vancouver's water supply from the Capilano, Seymour, and Coquitlam reservoirs is relatively soft and clean, which is actually favourable for all tub materials — soft water causes less mineral buildup and staining than the hard water common in the Prairies or southern Ontario. However, some areas of Metro Vancouver (particularly older infrastructure zones) can have slightly higher mineral content, which shows as water spots on dark-coloured tubs. If your home has noticeable mineral deposits on fixtures, consider a lighter-coloured tub that hides water spots, or budget for a water softener (\$1,500–\$3,000 installed).

Regardless of material, the most important factor for tub longevity in Metro Vancouver is the **installation environment**: adequate bathroom ventilation (minimum 50 CFM exhaust fan, ideally 80–110 CFM, ducted to the exterior), proper waterproofing around the tub surround per BC Building Code requirements, and regular maintenance of caulking joints where the tub meets the wall and floor. Even the best tub material will develop problems if the surrounding bathroom traps moisture and breeds mould.

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Q9

Should I refinish or replace my old bathtub in a Vancouver bathroom renovation?

If your existing tub is structurally sound — no cracks, no rust-through, and the drain and overflow are functional — refinishing is a cost-effective option that buys you 7–15 years of renewed life at roughly one-third the cost of full replacement. However, if your renovation involves moving plumbing, changing the bathroom layout, or the tub has structural damage, replacement is the better long-term investment.

Bathtub refinishing (also called reglazing or resurfacing) involves cleaning, etching, priming, and spraying a new coating over the existing tub surface. In Metro Vancouver, professional bathtub refinishing costs \$350–\$700 for a standard alcove tub, with the work completed in 4–6 hours and the tub ready for use within 24–48 hours. The process works well on cast iron, enamelled steel, and fibreglass tubs. A quality refinishing job by an experienced technician creates a smooth, glossy surface that looks like a new tub and resists staining and mould growth. The best refinishers use a two-part polyurethane or aliphatic acrylic-urethane coating that bonds chemically to the prepared surface.

Refinishing makes the most sense when your bathroom renovation is cosmetic — new tile, vanity, toilet, and fixtures — with the tub staying in its current location on existing plumbing. It is also the obvious choice for **Vancouver character homes** where the original cast iron tub is a design asset. A well-maintained 1920s cast iron clawfoot tub, professionally refinished, is often more desirable than a brand-new acrylic replacement. Refinishing preserves the character of the home and avoids the floor damage risk and plumbing complications of removing a 300-pound cast iron tub from a heritage bathroom.

The limitations of refinishing are real, though. The new coating is a surface layer, typically 1–2 millimetres thick, applied over the original enamel or surface. It is more susceptible to chipping from dropped bottles or abrasive cleaners than the original factory finish. Harsh chemical drain cleaners will damage the refinished surface — use enzymatic drain cleaners only. In Metro Vancouver's humid climate, the edges where the refinished surface meets caulking lines need careful maintenance; if moisture gets under the coating through a chip or poor caulking, the coating can peel and blister. Most professional refinishing companies offer a 3–5 year warranty, with the coating lasting 7–15 years with proper care.

Full bathtub replacement is the right choice when any of these conditions apply: the tub has structural cracks or rust-through (common in enamelled steel tubs after 20–30 years), the drain or overflow assembly is corroded beyond repair, you are changing the bathroom layout and relocating plumbing, you want to convert from a tub to a walk-in shower or upgrade from an alcove tub to a freestanding soaker, or the tub is fibreglass that has become permanently stained or soft. Replacement costs in Metro Vancouver range from \$1,500–\$4,000 for a standard alcove tub swap (same location, same plumbing) to \$3,000–\$8,000+ for a freestanding tub installation with drain relocation and new faucet.

There is also a **hidden cost calculation** to consider. If your bathroom renovation budget is \$15,000–\$30,000 for a mid-range gut renovation, spending \$400–\$600 to refinish rather than \$2,500–\$4,000 to replace frees up \$2,000–\$3,400 that you can redirect toward better tile, upgraded fixtures, proper waterproofing, or a higher-quality vanity — areas that have a bigger impact on the daily experience and long-term durability of the bathroom.

One important caution: DIY bathtub refinishing kits sold at hardware stores for \$30–\$80 are not comparable to professional refinishing. These kits use inferior coatings that peel within months, especially in Vancouver's humid

bathroom environments. They also require etching the tub surface with acid, which produces dangerous fumes in an enclosed bathroom. Professional refinishing uses spray equipment, proper ventilation, and commercial-grade coatings that are not available to consumers. This is a case where the professional result is dramatically better than DIY.

For condos and strata properties in Metro Vancouver, refinishing has the added advantage of minimal disruption — no heavy demolition, no hauling a tub through common hallways, no risk of water damage to units below, and no extended construction timeline. Many strata councils look more favourably on refinishing than full tub replacement because the liability and disruption risks are substantially lower.

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How do I remove a built-in bathtub from a small Vancouver condo bathroom for replacement?

Removing a built-in bathtub from a small Vancouver condo bathroom requires strata council approval first, followed by careful disconnection of plumbing, removal of the tub surround, and extraction of the tub through tight doorways and hallways — a job best handled by an experienced bathroom contractor with condo renovation experience. This is not a DIY project in a strata building due to the risk of water damage to neighbouring units and the logistical challenges of working in confined condo spaces.

Getting Strata Approval First

Before any work begins, you **must** obtain written approval from your strata council. Starting a condo bathroom demolition without strata approval can result in immediate stop-work orders, fines (often \$200 or more per day), and personal liability for any damage to common property or neighbouring units. Most Metro Vancouver strata corporations require a detailed renovation plan, proof of contractor insurance (minimum \$2 million general liability), WorkSafeBC clearance letter, specified work hours (typically 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM weekdays, no weekends), and waterproofing documentation for the new installation. Allow 2–6 weeks for strata approval depending on your building's review process and meeting schedule.

The Removal Process

Step one is shutting off water supply to the bathroom. In most Vancouver condos, individual unit shut-off valves are located in the bathroom itself or in a mechanical closet. If your unit does not have individual shut-offs, the building's main water supply to your floor or stack may need to be temporarily shut down — this requires coordination with strata management and advance notice to affected residents.

Next, the tub surround must come down. In most condo bathrooms built from the 1990s onward, the tub surround is either acrylic panels or tile over cement backer board. Tile surrounds are demolished with a reciprocating saw and pry bar, cutting through the backer board and removing it in sections. This is the dustiest and noisiest phase — proper dust containment with plastic sheeting and a HEPA-rated vacuum is essential in a condo to prevent dust migration through shared ventilation systems. The surround removal exposes the plumbing rough-in and allows access to disconnect the drain and overflow.

Disconnecting the drain and overflow requires a licensed plumber. Condo plumbing stacks are shared between units, and any damage to the drain connection can cause water leaks into the unit below — a liability nightmare in a strata building. The plumber will disconnect the drain shoe and overflow assembly, cap the drain temporarily, and assess the condition of the existing plumbing for the new tub installation. In older Vancouver condos (pre-2000),

you may encounter ABS drain piping with solvent-welded connections that require cutting rather than unscrewing.

Removing the tub itself from a small condo bathroom is the logistical challenge. Standard alcove tubs are 60 inches long and 30–32 inches wide, and condo bathroom doorways are typically 24–28 inches wide. The tub usually **will not fit through the door** without tilting it on end and angling it through, which requires at least two people and careful measurement of the doorway, hallway, and any corners between the bathroom and the unit's front door. In some tight condo layouts, the tub must be cut in half with a reciprocating saw to get it out — this works for acrylic and fibreglass tubs. Steel and cast iron tubs may need to be broken into pieces in place (cast iron shatters with a sledgehammer; steel can be cut with an angle grinder).

Floor and wall inspection follows tub removal. Expect to find some degree of moisture damage — even well-maintained condo bathrooms in Vancouver's humid climate often show dark staining or minor mould on the subfloor where the tub sat, particularly around the drain area. Any mould must be remediated before the new tub goes in. Subfloor repair in a condo bathroom typically costs \$300–\$1,000. The waterproofing membrane for the new installation should extend across the entire floor area under and around the tub, not just in the shower zone.

Cost for tub removal and replacement in a Metro Vancouver condo bathroom runs \$3,000–\$7,000 for a straightforward same-location swap, including demolition, disposal, plumbing, new tub, surround installation, and waterproofing. Condo renovations typically add 10–20% to costs compared to house renovations due to restricted work hours, materials handling (elevator booking, hallway protection), insurance requirements, and strata coordination. Disposal of the old tub costs \$100–\$300 depending on material — your contractor should handle removal to an approved disposal facility.

Protect common hallways and elevator interiors with moving blankets or hardboard before carrying anything out. Most strata corporations require hallway and elevator protection as a condition of renovation approval, and damage to common property comes out of your pocket.

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What size freestanding tub fits comfortably in a typical Vancouver master bathroom?

A 55–60-inch freestanding tub fits comfortably in most Metro Vancouver master bathrooms, which typically range from 50–70 square feet in single-family homes and 45–60 square feet in condos and townhomes. The key is not just the tub dimensions but the clearance space around it — you need a minimum of 6 inches of clear space on all accessible sides, with 12–18 inches being comfortable for cleaning and stepping in and out.

The most common freestanding tub sizes sold in Metro Vancouver are **59–60 inches long by 28–32 inches wide**, which is the direct equivalent of a standard alcove tub length. These fit well in master bathrooms that are at least 8 feet by 7 feet (56 square feet). For slightly larger bathrooms of 65–80 square feet, a **66–67-inch tub** provides a noticeably more luxurious soaking experience and accommodates taller bathers more comfortably. For compact spaces, **54–55-inch Japanese-style soaking tubs** are gaining popularity in Metro Vancouver — they are shorter in length but deeper (20–22 inches of soaking depth versus the typical 14–16 inches in a standard tub), providing a full-immersion soak in a smaller footprint.

When measuring your master bathroom for a freestanding tub, you need to account for more than the tub footprint. Plan for these **minimum clearances**: 6 inches between the tub and any wall (to allow cleaning behind and beside the tub — critical for mould prevention in Vancouver's humid climate), 12 inches of walkway space on the entry side of the tub (24 inches is ideal for comfortable access), and clearance for the freestanding tub filler faucet, which typically extends 8–12 inches from the wall or floor on one side. A 60-inch tub with proper clearances on all sides requires a floor area of roughly 72 inches by 46 inches — about 23 square feet dedicated to the tub zone alone.

For Metro Vancouver condos and townhomes, space is usually the limiting factor. Condo master bathrooms built in the 2000s–2020s across Burnaby, Richmond, Coquitlam, and Vancouver proper typically run 45–55 square feet, which can accommodate a freestanding tub of 54–60 inches if the bathroom layout allows — but it will likely mean choosing between a freestanding tub and a spacious vanity. In many condo master bathrooms, a freestanding tub works best when the bathroom also has a separate walk-in shower, freeing the tub from double duty.

Weight is a serious consideration in Metro Vancouver's wood-frame construction. A 60-inch acrylic freestanding tub weighs approximately 70–90 pounds empty. Filled with water (roughly 50–70 gallons, or 400–560 pounds of water) and an adult bather (150–250 pounds), the total load is 620–900 pounds concentrated on a footprint of about 12 square feet — approximately 50–75 pounds per square foot. Standard residential floor framing in BC is designed for 40 pounds per square foot live load. This means a freestanding tub on a second-floor master bathroom often exceeds the designed floor loading capacity and may require reinforcement of the floor joists beneath.

A structural assessment by a qualified contractor or engineer before purchasing a freestanding tub for a second-floor bathroom is strongly recommended. Reinforcing floor joists (sistering additional joists alongside existing ones) typically costs \$500–\$2,000 depending on accessibility from below. This is particularly relevant in Vancouver's pre-1980 housing stock, where floor joists may be undersized by current standards.

Plumbing placement also affects which tub size and position works in your bathroom. Freestanding tubs require a floor drain connection centred under the tub's drain location, which varies by tub model. If the existing drain is not where the new tub's drain needs to be, relocating it costs \$500–\$1,500 for a licensed plumber. The freestanding tub filler (faucet) can be wall-mounted or floor-mounted — floor-mounted fillers require running supply lines through the floor, while wall-mounted fillers need the tub positioned close enough to a wall for the faucet spout to reach.

Before purchasing, **create a full-size template** on your bathroom floor using cardboard or painter's tape. Mark the tub footprint plus clearances on all sides, then live with it for a day — walk around it, open the shower door, stand at the vanity. This simple test reveals whether the tub size you are considering actually fits the space comfortably in daily use.

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Q12

Can a freestanding bathtub be installed on a second floor in a Vancouver wood-frame home safely?

Yes, a freestanding bathtub can be installed on a second floor in a Vancouver wood-frame home, but the floor structure almost always needs to be assessed and may require reinforcement to safely handle the concentrated load. A filled freestanding tub with an adult bather can weigh 700–1,000 pounds, and this weight is distributed across a relatively small floor area — far exceeding the standard residential live load design of 40

pounds per square foot that the BC Building Code specifies for bedroom and living areas.

Let's look at the actual numbers. A standard 60-inch acrylic freestanding soaker tub weighs about 70–90 pounds empty. Filled with water — typically 50–70 gallons — it adds 420–590 pounds. Add a bather at 150–250 pounds and you are looking at **640–930 pounds total**, concentrated on a footprint of roughly 10–13 square feet. That translates to approximately 50–90 pounds per square foot of concentrated load. BC Building Code residential floor design assumes 40 pounds per square foot live load for habitable rooms, so a freestanding tub exceeds this by 25–125% depending on tub size and water capacity.

This does not mean a second-floor freestanding tub is impossible — it means the floor framing needs to be adequate. In many Metro Vancouver homes, especially those built after 1990 with engineered floor joists (TJI or similar), the existing floor structure may already have sufficient capacity, particularly if the joists span a short distance (under 12 feet) and the tub is positioned near a bearing wall or beam. Homes built in the 1960s–1980s across Burnaby, Surrey, Coquitlam, and suburban Vancouver typically have solid-sawn 2x10 joists at 16-inch centres, which may or may not be adequate depending on span length, wood species, and joist condition.

Older character homes in Kitsilano, Main Street, Dunbar, and East Vancouver (pre-1945) are the most concerning. These homes often have 2x8 or even 2x6 floor joists at 16-inch centres, with subfloor made of original 1x6 diagonal sheathing rather than modern 3/4-inch plywood. These floors were designed for the loads of their era and may already be at capacity before adding a heavy freestanding tub. Sagging floors, bouncy floors, or visible deflection when walking are warning signs that the joists are stressed.

Getting a Structural Assessment

The safest approach is hiring a **structural engineer** or an experienced renovation contractor to assess the floor framing before purchasing the tub. An engineer's assessment typically costs \$300–\$800 in Metro Vancouver and includes inspection of joist size, species, spacing, span, condition, and connection to bearing walls. The engineer will provide a written report stating whether the existing floor can support the tub or what reinforcement is needed.

The most common reinforcement method is **sistering** — bolting or nailing additional joists alongside the existing ones directly beneath the tub location. This effectively doubles the load capacity of the reinforced joists. Sistering requires access from below (through the first-floor ceiling or from a basement), and the new joists must bear on the same supports as the originals. In Metro Vancouver, sistering costs \$500–\$2,000 for labour and materials depending on accessibility and the number of joists involved.

Alternatively, a **steel beam or LVL (laminated veneer lumber) beam** can be installed beneath the floor perpendicular to the joists to create a new bearing point, reducing the effective span of the joists under the tub. This is a more involved modification costing \$1,500–\$4,000 but may be necessary when sistering alone is insufficient.

Plumbing considerations add another layer to second-floor freestanding tub installations. The drain must connect to the waste stack or a branch drain that runs between the floor joists to the nearest stack. In older Vancouver homes, the original drain routing may not accommodate a freestanding tub drain in the desired location, requiring a plumber to run new ABS drain piping — this involves cutting into the first-floor ceiling to route piping between joists. Budget \$800–\$2,000 for drain relocation on a second-floor installation.

The **waterproofing** around a second-floor freestanding tub is critical because any leak has the potential to damage the ceiling and room below. A waterproof membrane should be installed across the entire bathroom floor (not just the shower area) when a freestanding tub is present. This is especially important in Vancouver's humid climate where condensation on cold-water pipes below the floor can add to moisture load. The membrane cost is modest — \$500–\$1,500 for a full bathroom floor — and is excellent insurance against the catastrophic water damage that a second-floor plumbing leak can cause.

This project requires coordination between a contractor, plumber, and potentially a structural engineer — all of whom should carry WorkSafeBC coverage and appropriate insurance.

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What tub-shower combo options work best for a small Vancouver bathroom under 40 square feet?

For a small Vancouver bathroom under 40 square feet, a standard 60-inch alcove tub with a shower valve, curved shower rod, and glass panel or curtain remains the most space-efficient tub-shower combo — but compact 54-inch tubs, tub-shower units with integrated wall panels, and corner tub configurations can maximize every inch. In Metro Vancouver's housing market, where condo bathrooms and older single-family home bathrooms routinely measure 35–45 square feet, making the tub-shower combo work efficiently is one of the most common renovation challenges.

The **standard 60 x 30-inch alcove tub** is still the go-to for small bathrooms because the dimensions are proven and every plumber in Metro Vancouver knows how to rough in for this size. The tub fits into a three-wall recess, the plumbing connections are straightforward, and the tub surround provides a complete wet area with minimal waterproofing complexity. In Metro Vancouver, a standard acrylic alcove tub costs \$400–\$1,000, with full installation including plumbing, waterproofing, tile surround, shower valve, and showerhead running \$3,000–\$7,000 depending on finishes.

To gain usable space in the shower area without changing the tub, install a **curved shower rod** — these arc outward by 3–5 inches at the centre, giving you noticeably more elbow room inside the shower without taking up floor space when the curtain is open. A curved rod costs \$30–\$80 and is one of the most impactful small-bathroom upgrades for minimal investment. Alternatively, a **fixed glass panel** mounted on one end of the tub (covering roughly two-thirds of the tub length) provides splash protection without the claustrophobic feel of a fully enclosed glass door, and it makes the bathroom feel more open than a shower curtain. Glass panels cost \$400–\$1,200 installed in Metro Vancouver.

One-piece tub-shower units (also called tub-shower surrounds) are an excellent option for small bathrooms where budget and waterproofing simplicity are priorities. These are moulded acrylic or fibreglass units that combine the tub, walls, and sometimes shelving into a single watertight piece. Because there are no seams or grout lines, they are inherently waterproof — a significant advantage in Vancouver's humid climate where grout lines and caulk joints are the most common failure points in traditional tile surrounds. One-piece units cost \$600–\$2,000 for the unit and \$1,500–\$4,000 installed. The catch: one-piece units are large and may not fit through a small condo bathroom doorway. **Two-piece and three-piece tub-shower kits** solve this problem — they break the surround into sections that fit through standard doorways and snap or caulk together on site. These cost \$400–\$1,500 for the kit.

For bathrooms that are truly tight — under 38 square feet — consider a **54-inch alcove tub**. These shorter tubs sacrifice 6 inches of bathing length but can free up precious floor space for a wider vanity or more comfortable toilet

clearance. The trade-off is that 54-inch tubs are less comfortable for tall bathers and have a smaller selection of models available. Pricing is similar to 60-inch tubs: \$400–\$1,200 for the unit.

Corner tub-shower combos are another space-saving option, positioning the tub diagonally across a corner of the bathroom. These work well when the bathroom layout does not accommodate a standard three-wall alcove. Corner tubs are typically 54–60 inches along each wall with a diagonal front face, and they open up floor space in the centre of the bathroom. However, they require more complex waterproofing and framing, and the non-standard dimensions mean custom glass enclosures rather than off-the-shelf options. Corner installations cost \$3,500–\$8,000 in Metro Vancouver.

Regardless of which tub-shower combo you choose, **ventilation is non-negotiable** in a small bathroom. A bathroom under 40 square feet generates the same amount of steam as a larger bathroom but has less air volume to absorb it. An exhaust fan rated at minimum 50 CFM — ideally 80 CFM with a humidity-sensing switch that runs automatically after showers — is essential. In Vancouver's climate, where outdoor humidity already runs 75–85%, mechanical ventilation is the only reliable way to remove shower moisture. The fan must vent to the building exterior through proper ductwork, never into an attic or ceiling cavity. Budget \$300–\$800 for fan installation or upgrade.

Waterproofing the tub surround is the most critical element of any tub-shower combo in Metro Vancouver. If using tile on cement backer board (not drywall — never drywall in wet areas), a continuous waterproofing membrane such as Schluter Kerdi or liquid-applied RedGuard must cover the entire surround area from the tub lip to at least 6 inches above the showerhead. Every corner, seam, and valve penetration must be sealed with waterproof membrane tape or band. This waterproofing work costs \$1,000–\$2,500 for a standard tub surround and is the single best investment in preventing the mould problems that plague Vancouver bathrooms with inadequate moisture protection.

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How long does a bathtub replacement take in a typical Vancouver bathroom renovation?

A straightforward bathtub replacement in a Metro Vancouver bathroom typically takes 2 to 4 days when the new tub fits into the same alcove and no plumbing needs to be relocated. If you're changing tub styles — say, swapping an alcove tub for a freestanding soaker — or if your plumbing rough-in needs modification, expect the project to take 5 to 7 days or longer.

The timeline depends heavily on the scope of work involved. A simple like-for-like swap where the new tub drops into the same footprint is the fastest scenario. Your contractor will disconnect and remove the old tub (half a day), inspect the subfloor and framing for water damage or rot (common in older Vancouver homes, especially those built before 1975), make any necessary repairs, install the new tub and connect the drain and supply lines, then finish the surround. If you're keeping an existing tile surround in good condition, you save significant time. If the surround needs replacement, add 2 to 3 days for cement backer board installation, waterproofing membrane application (Schluter Kerdi or liquid-applied RedGard), tile installation, and grouting.

Waterproofing is the step you never want rushed. In Metro Vancouver's marine climate with over 1,200 millimetres of annual rainfall and outdoor humidity averaging 75 to 85 percent, a poorly waterproofed tub surround will develop mould behind the walls within 2 to 3 years. A quality waterproofing membrane system adds a day to the project but prevents catastrophic failure down the road. BC Building Code Section 9.29 requires waterproofing in tub and shower enclosures — this is not optional.

Factors that extend the timeline include discovering rot or water damage in the subfloor (add 1 to 2 days for structural repair), upgrading old galvanized supply lines to copper or PEX in pre-war homes (add half a day to a full day), relocating the drain for a different tub configuration (add 1 to 2 days plus a plumbing permit), and electrical work if you're adding a whirlpool or heated soaker tub (requires a dedicated circuit and inspection through Technical Safety BC).

For **condo and strata bathroom renovations**, add time for the approval process before work even begins. Most strata corporations require written approval, proof of contractor insurance (minimum \$2 million liability), WorkSafeBC clearance, and adherence to specific work hours — typically 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM on weekdays. Materials must be brought through common areas carefully, and the old tub removal through hallways and elevators requires coordination.

Cost-wise in Metro Vancouver, a basic alcove tub replacement runs \$1,500 to \$4,000 installed with plumbing connections. A freestanding soaker tub installation costs \$2,500 to \$8,000 installed, with drain relocation adding

\$800 to \$2,000. If you need a full surround tear-out and re-tile with proper waterproofing, budget \$4,000 to \$10,000 on top of the tub cost. Permit fees for plumbing modifications are typically \$150 to \$400 depending on your municipality.

To keep your project on schedule, have your new tub on site before demolition day — backorders on specialty tubs can delay projects by weeks. Confirm the tub dimensions fit through your doorways and hallways (measure twice). And always build a 1 to 2 day buffer into your timeline for unexpected discoveries behind the walls, which are common in Metro Vancouver's aging housing stock.

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