

Bidet shower

A bidet shower (also known as "bidet spray", "bidet sprayer", or "health faucet") is a hand-held triggered nozzle, similar to that on a kitchen sink sprayer, that delivers a spray of water to assist in anal cleansing and cleaning the genitals after defecation and urination. In contrast to a bidet that is integrated with the toilet, a bidet shower has to be held by the hands, and cleaning does not take place automatically. Bidet showers are common in countries where water is considered essential for anal cleansing.

Drawbacks include the possibility of wetting a user's clothing if used carelessly. In addition, a user must be reasonably mobile and flexible to use a hand-held bidet shower.

Conventional or standalone bidet

A bidet is a plumbing fixture that is installed as a separate unit in the bathroom besides toilet, shower and sink. Some bidets resemble a large hand basin, with taps and a stopper so they can be filled up; other designs have a nozzle that squirts a jet of water to aid in cleansing.

Add-on bidets

In the past, getting a bidet meant installing a completely new plumbing unit into the bathroom. Newer bidets are often no longer standalone units: A bidet may be a movable or fixed nozzle attached to an existing toilet on back or side toilet rim, or a part of the toilet itself. In these cases, their use is restricted to cleaning the anus and genitals. Some bidets of this type produce a vertical water jet and others amore or less oblique one. Others have one nozzle on the side rim for both anal and genital areas, and other designs have two nozzles on the back rim, the shorter one, called the "family nozzle", is used for washing the area around the anus, and the longer one ("bidet nozzle") is designed for women to wash their vulvas.

Such attachable bidets (also called "combined toilets". "bidet attachments", or "add on bidets") are controlled either mechanically or electronically. Mechanically controlled bidets tend to be simple mechanisms manually controlled by a valve. The attachable bidets may be manufactured of plastic, chrome-plated metal, or stainless steel to accommodate many tastes and budgets.

Electronic bidets are controlled with waterproof electrical switches rather than with a traditional manual valve. There are models that have a heating element which blows warm air to dry the user after washing, that offer heated seats, wireless remote controls, illumination through built in night lights, or built in deodorizers and activated carbon filters to remove odors. Further refinements include adjustable water pressure, temperature compensation, and directional spray control. Where bathroom appearance is of concern, under-the-seat mounting types have become more popular.



A Finnish bidet shower.



A 20th century bidet (foreground)



Add-on electronic toilet seat bidet

An add-on bidet typically connects to the existing water supply of a toilet via the addition of a threaded tee pipe adapter, and requires no soldering or other plumbing work. Electronic add-on bidets also require a GFCI protected grounded electrical outlet.

Health aspects

Bidets are beneficial for those who suffer from hemorrhoids or other medical conditions. Toilet paper can be irritating to the sensitive skin in the perineal area, and warmed water provided by some bidets can offer relief. This is also true for older people who have less mobility, or very young children who cannot wipe themselves.^[3] Bidets help to alleviate discomfort associated with constipation, and can provide soothing and comfort to mothers before and after natural child birth.

Bidet attachments are sometimes included on hospital toilets because of their utility in maintaining hygiene. In such cases and also in public toilets, disinfection after each use must be easy, and preferably automatic. Warm-water bidets may harbor dangerous microbes if not properly disinfected.^[4]

Environmental aspects

From an environmental standpoint, bidets can reduce the need for toilet paper, saving households money on paper products and allowing users to reduce their carbon footprint by reducing their paper waste over time. On the other hand, they may modestly increase the amount of heated water used in the bathroom.^[5]

Electronic bidets are said to reduce water usage by 75% compared to faucets. They also eliminate the need for toilet paper and therefore reduce waste.^[5] The most advanced electronic bidets include a power saving function, which is designed to calculate when the bidet is used the most frequently during the day, and turns off when not in use, leading to maximum energy savings.

Costs

In countries where bidet are common, their prices are much lower than in countries where they are not common. In Italy, for example, the price for a bidet starts from €30 and seldom exceeds €150 (about US\$167). Now all over the world bidets may cost as low as €40 (about US\$46). In Middle Eastern countries, bidet attachments are much cheaper, being priced at around the equivalent of US\$10–20, which is attributed to their popularity and availability.

Attachable or add-on bidets, mechanically controlled, are cheaper than standalone units and the electronic ones. The expense of remodeling a typical North American bathroom to accommodate a traditional bidet fixture is large, in the thousands of dollars, while a mechanical add-on bidet can be purchased for around US\$46, and an add-on electronic bidet costs around US\$300. Additional features like warm air dryers, heated seats, or wireless remote controls may be more expensive.

Society and culture

Prevalence

Bidets are becoming increasingly popular with the ageing community, or for use among people with physical disabilities. These combined units make independent toileting possible for many people, affording greater

independence. These are often special units with higher toilet seats allowing easier wheelchair transfer, and with some form of electronic remote control that benefits an individual with limited mobility or requiring assistance.

Bidets are common bathroom fixtures in many southern European countries, especially Italy, where they are found in 97% of households (the installation of a bidet in a bathroom has been mandatory since 1975^[6]), Spain, and Portugal (installation is mandatory also since 1975^[7]). Additionally, they are rather widespread, although not standard, in France, and are often found in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, Slovenia, Malta, and Greece. Outside of Europe, they are very popular in some South American countries, notably in Argentina. Electronic bidet-integrated toilets, along with functions like toilet seat warmers, are commonly found in Japan.

In northern Europe, bidets are rare, although in Finland bidet showers are common.^[8]

In 1980, the first "paperless toilet" was launched in Japan by manufacturer Toto,^[9] a combination of toilet and bidet which also dries the user after washing. These combination toilet-bidets (washlet) with seat warmers, or attachable bidets are particularly popular in Japan and South Korea, found in approximately 60% of households. They are commonly found in hotels and even some public facilities. These bidet-toilets, along with toilet seat and bidet units (to convert an existing toilet) are sold in many countries, including the United States.

In the UK, toilet-integrated bidets with drying facility are becoming more widespread for use among people with physical disabilities.

Etymology

Bidet is a French word for "pony", and in Old French, *bider* meant "to trot". This etymology comes from the notion that one "rides" or straddles a bidet much like a pony is ridden. The word "bidet" was used in 15th century France to refer to the pet ponies that French royalty kept.^[10]

History

The bidet is possibly associated with the *chamber pot* and the *bourdaloue*, the latter being a small chamber pot like object specifically for the use of ladies on long trips.

The bidet appears to have been an invention of French furniture makers in the late 17th century, although no exact date or inventor is known.^{[11][12]} The earliest written reference to the bidet is in 1710 in Italy.

By 1900, due to plumbing improvements, the bidet (and chamber pot) moved from the bedroom to the bathroom. This was common in French palaces.

In the United States in 1928 John Harvey Kellogg applied for a patent on an "anal douche".^[13] In his application, he uses the term to describe a system comparable to what today might be called a bidet nozzle which can be attached to a toilet to perform anal cleansing with water.

The early 1980s saw the introduction of the electronic bidet from Japan, with names such as Bio Bidet, Biffy, and Gobidet. These devices have attachments that connect to existing toilet arrangements, and can be used for bathrooms lacking the space for both a separate bidet and toilet.

Gallery

Historical bidets



The bidet of Queen Maria Carolina of Naples, in the Royal Palace of Caserta, Italy



Personal hygiene near the rose and leaves, painted by Louis Leopold Boilly^[14]



Bidet, Museo de Carmen de Patagones, Argentina

See also

- Toilets in Japan
- Toilet seat
- Washlet

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