

DON'T KEEP YOUR SHAMPOO IN THE SHOWER...

...and 15 other surprising ways to keep your bathroom super-hygienic.
Stylist reports on what could be lurking behind your fancy fittings...

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JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS
SAFE TO GO BACK IN THE WATER...



When, if a fashion influencer posts an image of their #ootd from their bathroom, chances are there will be more queries about the geometric tiles she's standing on than the gem-encrusted heels she's

wearing. Bathrooms are having a moment – the once private space is now the backdrop of choice for a 2 million-strong #bathroomselfie phenomenon, and in the process spawning our obsession with everything from windowsill succulents to copper taps. But as

we're spending so much time adorning them, have we forgotten how to use them? That artful arrangement of skincare might look pleasing, but if it's by the window it could be what's causing that patch of dry skin. And as the room where you're most likely to come across

E.coli, MRSA and Norovirus is the bathroom, experts warn it has the potential to make – or break – our health, with where we store products to how we design the space all playing a part. Here's how to ensure yours really is as good as it looks...



FRAGRANCE

Heat, sunlight and oxygen can all cause perfume to degrade, so shelves near windows or above radiators are a no-go. "The minute they are un-stoppered, perfumes start to oxidise and the fragile notes are destroyed," says master perfumer Roja Dove. "The perfect temperature for perfume is between 6 and 10°C, and ensure the lid is on properly," he says.

TOOTHBRUSH

If your sink's in spitting distance of your toilet seat, you might want to consider storing your toothbrush in your bathroom cabinet. Because when you flush the loo, faecal spores shoot up (gross) and there's a 60% chance you're brushing your teeth with airborne faecal matter, according to Connecticut's Quinnipiac University. Always put the lid down before flushing too.

MAKE-UP TOOLS

Brushes look super-stylish in recycled candle jars but keeping them close to your sink runs the risk that the bristles will get damp, causing excess water to trickle down and damage the glue holding the bristles together. Moisture is the perfect breeding ground for bacteria so keep eyelash curlers stored away too to avoid risking an eye infection.

MAKE-UP

Most of us apply our make-up at the bathroom sink and luckily make-up usually has airtight antimicrobial technology, making it harder for bacteria (which thrive in heat and humidity) to interfere. But this doesn't rule out contamination, especially formulas containing water, which breeds bacteria. Store make-up and nail varnish in a closed cabinet away from the shower.

MEDICINE

Wildly fluctuating temperatures in your bathroom can make medication less potent and cause it to go off before the expiry date. According to MedlinePlus, pills and capsules, including birth control pills, are easily damaged by heat and moisture in the bathroom, with aspirin pills breaking down into stomach-irritating vinegar and salicylic acid. Store yours in a cool, dry cabinet and keep the doors closed. Better yet, place all medication in sealed wash bags in the cabinet.

FACE CLOTH

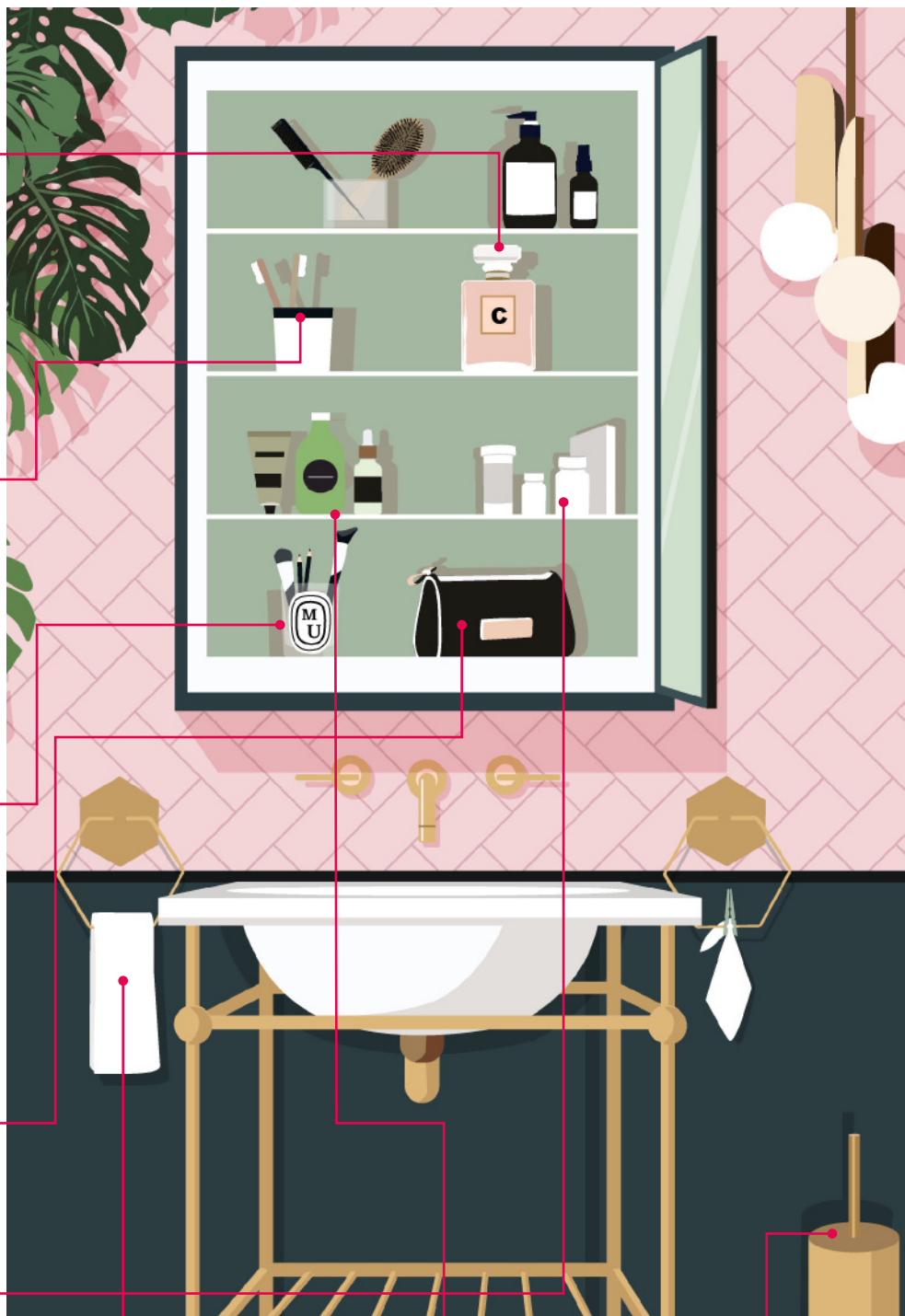
The ideal temperature for bacteria to breed is between 20 and 45°C, and your bathroom often sits within this range. So leaving a damp cloth by the sink in a pool of warm water is the perfect breeding ground for bacteria. The London School Of Hygiene And Tropical Medicine advises washing your face cloth weekly at 90°C to nuke bacteria. While you're at it, switch to Aurelia Probiotic Skincare Monday to Sunday Bamboo Muslins, £24 for seven, which have natural anti-microbial properties.

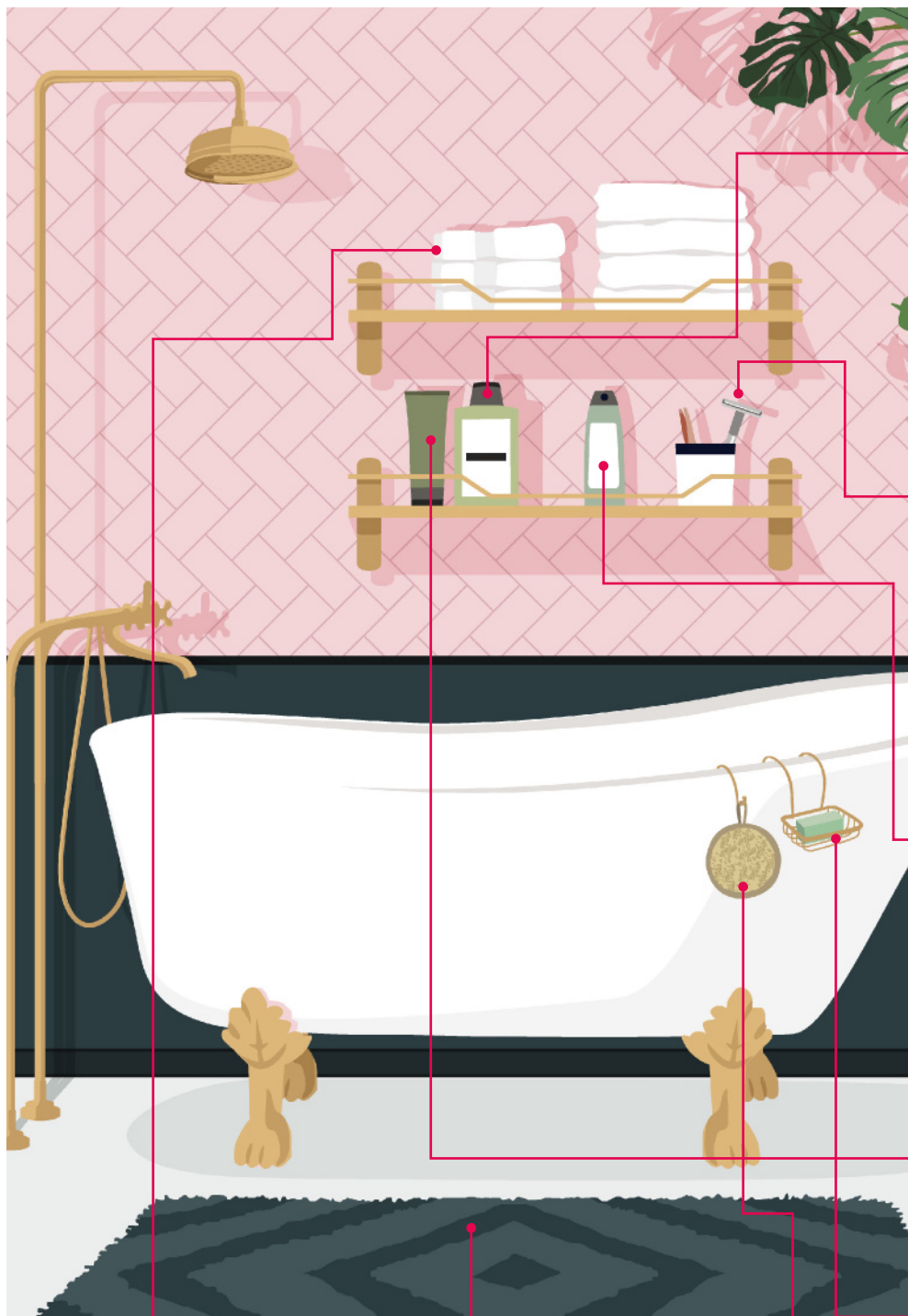
SKINCARE

"With skincare a product's stability relies on the packaging," says Paula Begoun, founder of Paula's Choice. Jars are the worst because they harbour bacteria and let air and light in which causes ingredients to deteriorate. And while pumps are the most protective, if the product stands for weeks between usage hardened gunk on the nozzle can harbour bacteria so avoid flitting between products. Vitamin C and retinols are products degraded by light, so keep them in a cabinet, but avoid ones with under-lighting.

TOILET BRUSH

We know it's grim, but whatever you're cleaning off the toilet bowl ends up living on the brush. And it can spread up the handle after you've used it. Once you've cleaned your toilet, flush it – with the lid down – and then add two cups of bleach to the clean toilet water and let the brush soak in the bowl for two hours. Rinse with clean water and leave to dry completely. Please, please remember to wash the brush holder too.





HAIRCARE

While it's convenient to have your shampoo and conditioner under the shower head, we urge you not to. This is because heat from the hot water alters the composition of the formula, making the active ingredients, especially organic ones, less stable. Stash yours at the other end of the tub or invest in a shelf away from the hot water to ensure key ingredients remain intact.

RAZOR

A huge 77.5% women shave at home* but the blades can oxidise and rust if they're wet for a long period of time. "Leaving your razor face-down on a warm and soapy surface increases the risk of bacterial contamination," confirms Adam Boulding, scientific communication manager at Gillette Venus. Keep yours upright in a stand or stick it to the wall with adhesive pads and replace monthly.

BODY WASH

Using a pump formula cleanser or body wash? Then hide it from the shower head and taps. There's a chance that droplets of moisture can condense and work their way up the pump and dilute the formula. Jars of body scrub can also fall victim if lids are kept off for too long, with salt and sugar-based products particularly vulnerable to degradation even if they're housed in tubes.

FAKE TAN

Fake tan neatly lined up on your shelf? Time to relocate, as a steamy bathroom is a fake tan's kryptonite. "DHA is the active ingredient that helps us to faux a glow but degrades in elevated temperatures," says Carly Hobbs, Sienna X Brand Ambassador so keep all bronzing formulations safely stored in your cabinet.

BATH TOWELS

A study from the University of Arizona found that nearly 90% of bathroom towels were contaminated with coliform bacteria (commonly found in faeces), while 14% carried E. Coli after two days' use. Wash at 90°C after a maximum of three uses on wash and use a laundry detergent that kills bacteria like Dettol's Anti-Bacterial Laundry Cleanser, £6. If you share a bathroom with others, use a colour-coded system, so there's no confusion as to whose towel is whose.

BATH MAT

Hair and skin can accumulate on your bath mat leading to mould and fungus if not washed on a weekly basis. This makes the mat – after the toilet bowl – one of the most contaminated parts of the bathroom. If moisture gets trapped within the fabric of your mat or rug it can also promote dust mites and spores. These can cause allergies and aggravation of asthma or skin issues. Always hang it up on a rail to encourage it to dry, then treat it like your face cloth with a 90°C wash, weekly.

EXFOLIATING MITTS OR LOOFAH

They might leave your skin super-soft, but according to a study published in the *Journal Of Clinical Microbiology* mitts and loofahs are a haven for bacteria, including *Pseudomonas*, *Enterococcus* and group B *Streptococcus* – which can lead to skin aggravations and respiratory side-effects. Replace them three times a month or try dry body brushing instead – because it's a dry process, it's less of a bacteria haven. Store it bristle up and keep it away from wet areas.

HAND SOAP

That artisanal hand soap you *love* could be harbouring more germs that you'd care to know about. Bars of hand soap need to be kept on dishes with holes in the base to allow water to drain away and prevent bacteria like *Staphylococcus* (known for skin irritations and infections) from forming. Fancy ceramic soap dispenser? Make sure you clean that every time you refill your liquid soap and wipe the outside of it with antibacterial wipes regularly.