

Justifying the installation of a Surestop stopcock as a person-centred intervention to maximise occupational performance.

THE SURESTOP STOPCOCK RANGE

A Surestop stopcock is a unique mechanical device, with no electrical components enabling the safe management of water use in the home. With the simple flick of the switch, the Surestop stopcock instantly turns off the water to the bathroom, kitchen or whole property dependent upon the installation site. It is an easily installed and low-cost safety measure that should be considered in every bathroom and kitchen adaptation.

There are currently two options for the stopcock installation, with another innovative device to follow:

1. Switch at source - replacing the traditional brass stopcock with the easy-to-use switch.
2. Remote switch option, which can be located at any height up to 6m away from the device.

THE RISK OF DOMESTIC FLOODING

Flooding has the potential to cause significant damage to your client's home. The potential water loss from a burst pipe in a typical house can equate to 400 litres (two baths of water) if the water supply is stopped quickly. However, if left unchecked for a full day, as much as 9,600 litres of water (48 baths of water) will flow into the home. In addition to the loss of property, the impact and disruption to the lives of service users are immeasurable. Even after relatively small floods properties can be deemed too risky or 'hazardous to health' and force service users to move out or relocate until the damage is repaired. Emergency provision of respite services also increases both the potential economic loss and personal distress from flooding incidents. For all domestic properties, it is therefore important that a stopcock is accessible and easily turned off in an emergency.

EVIDENCE AND CLINICAL REASONING

For some of your clients, there may be an increased risk of domestic flooding. This includes those with Learning Disabilities, Parkinson's, Dementia, or another condition that affects mental reasoning, where a person may not have the capacity to determine safe water use at home. For example, a bathroom can present several challenges for a person with dementia, given they are likely to have problems with their short-term memory and may struggle to use common bathroom fixtures with the same competence as they used to. Accidental flooding can occur easily when taps are left running or plugs become blocked, creating several hazardous risks to the home and all those who live there. The presence of hot water and water flooded

onto floors also create additional hazards for a client group with an already increased risk of falls and other

water-related accidents. When providing occupational therapy assessment and intervention to this client group, it is vital to consider the needs of the individual. Common justifications and tips for maximising occupational performance when bathing is explored below.

Tips on occupational performance and clinical reasoning for the Surestop stopcock:

1. *A person-centred approach.*

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE 2018) recommend that the principles of person-centred care underpin good practice in dementia care. As with all care planning for people with limited or reduced capacity, the assessment and intervention process requires an understanding of the needs of the individual, promoting independence and dignity whilst minimising the risk of harm. The varied range of devices in the Surestop stopcock range allows for a range of location options, including a remote switch that can be positioned at the right height or accessible position for your client. This enables you the creativity to install the device in an infinite number of locations, supporting individualised care planning and the 'just right' solution for each client. Therefore, it offers protection against these risks associated with water use and provides an opportunity for a person-centred approach to intervention planning.

2. *Protects the home environment.*

All homes are at risk of domestic flooding and according to the leading UK domestic insurer, Direct Line, the average household cost for damage caused by burst water pipe is £7000, with the smallest of leaks quickly becoming an expensive issue to rectify. Where adaptive equipment, specialist bathroom and or kitchen installations are present these costs can escalate considerably. Aside from the immediate loss of personal property and equipment to water damage, there is secondary damage to consider and the health implications of living in a damp environment. According to the NHS advice service (2021), having damp or mould in your home increases your likely hood of having respiratory problems, respiratory infection, allergies, and asthma. Mould is a huge problem after a flood, toxic mould or black mould can have a long-term impact on health and has risks to those experiencing respiratory illness, such as COPD, Emphysema or Asthma. Including the Surestop stopcock in bathroom and kitchen adaptations as standard, offers some insurance against these risks by enabling water supplies to be stopped instantly, significantly reducing the long-term impact to the home environment of a flooding incident.

3. *Protects against falls and slips.*

NICE (2013) report that fall and fall related injuries are a common and serious problem for older people. For people with dementia, the risk is increased because of predisposing risk

factors including reduced functioning, sensory impairment, poor spatial awareness, disorientation, and potential dehydration. Due to the increased falls risk from accidental flooding in bathrooms, traditional care models suggest barring independent access to bathrooms completely for many

individuals with reduced capacity. However, within its 5 key principles of decision making, The Mental Capacity Act (2005) highlights the importance of seeking the 'least restrictive option', when making decisions about the care of a person with reduced or fluctuating capacity. The installation of a Surestop stopcock with a remote switch can significantly reduce the bathroom falls risk for an individual by enabling carers to restrict the water supply to that room when not in use. Therefore, restricting the water, not the person.

The Royal College of Occupational Therapy (RCOT) Falls Guidelines (2020) also advises that 'Occupational therapists must seek opportunities to discuss an individual's risk of falls and seek opportunities to maximise the interventions available to the individual to reduce their risk and prevent harm'. The Surestop stopcock is therefore ideally suited to support the implementation of these guidelines as part of a wider bathroom adaptation or wet room, or when added to existing pipework within a client's home bathroom.

4. Protects against scalds and burns.

The Surestop stopcock can be fitted to both hot and cold-water supplies, enabling the safe management of hot water. Accidental burns and scalds are common in the home and the risks increase for those with reduced mental capacity, decreased reaction times or inability to easily remove themselves from harm's way. According to the British Burns Association (2017), most burns and scalds in older people occur from hot liquids in the home. Older people's skin burns faster and at lower temperatures than younger people, increasing the severity of relatively minor household accidents. The same issues are present when considering a client who has just had surgery and may think a wound is healed enough for warmer water immersion when it is not.

With many advantages over traditional anti-scald devices that need to be fitted to each tap or showerhead, this discreet device can be fitted with a remote switch and so does not compromise the overall look of a bathroom or kitchen and enables other users to access the facilities as normal when needed. By enabling the hot water to be switched off to a room or appliance when not in use, the Surestop stopcock drastically reduces the likelihood of an accidental burn or scald from hot water. Yet the water can easily be restored when needed for supervised or supported bathing at the flick of a switch. It can also be used to support safe bathing, optimising independence by ensuring once the required water has been used to fill a bath or sink, the system is easily turned off to prevent further hot water from being added,



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minimising the risk to the client. Thus, maximising independence and optimising occupational performance in bathing.

STOCKISTS AND SUPPORT

Surestop have worked closely with installers for nearly 20 years; helping them to understand how to fit products, provide training and installation support. Surestop have a wide network of

reliable stockists, who sell products both in-branch and online. If you have a query or need support with housing design and adaptations, please contact:

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References

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