

Taps and water temperature regulation

Many people have difficulty with grasp, hand function or sensation which affects daily living activities. This publication gives information about taps, tap turners, and equipment that helps to regulate water temperature. Please speak to an occupational therapist about options that may suit your individual needs.

Things to consider:

- Your hand strength and the type of tap handle or grip that suits you.
- Your ability to sense and react quickly when water temperature is too hot, to prevent burns.
- Who else will be using the taps – other members of the household, children, visitors?
- In rental properties, ask your landlord before making changes to taps or plumbing.

Tap turners

Tap turners are useful for turning taps on and off, operate like a lever, and need less hand strength. Each tap turner is designed to fit a specific type of tap head, although some may fit a range of different taps. You need to buy a tap turner that fits the style of tap you have.

Use caution if using them to turn the tap off. If you turn the tap off too tightly, it may affect the washer.



Things to consider:

- Tap turners may be better used as temporary devices.
- These devices may be less effective than permanent solutions such as new taps.

Lever taps

You can consider replacing your existing taps. Lever taps can make it easier to turn taps on and off. There are many lever taps on the market. Many of the major tap manufacturers have a lever tap range. Some levers are very long and can be operated by your elbow. Others are shorter and are operated by using the hand. Some lever tap products can be fitted to an existing tap spindle.



Mixer taps

Mixer taps can make it easier to turn taps on and off. They usually feature a single lever outlet that blends hot and cold water. The lever can be rotated to control the water temperature and raised to increase water flow.



Alternative washers

Alternative washers can make it easier to turn your taps on and off. A **hydroseal** is a tap valve which fits most taps, converting them from a washer system to a dripless light action system. This means you can more easily control the water flow and turn the tap on full with just a three quarter turn. A hydroseal can be used with hot or cold water, and low or high water pressure.



Alternative tap spindles

Replacing regular tap spindles with ceramic spindles can often make them easier to operate. They are also known as $\frac{1}{4}$ turn, $\frac{1}{2}$ turn and $\frac{3}{4}$ turn spindles.

You will need to talk to your local plumbing store about which ceramic spindle will suit your pipework and taps and the probable cost of purchase and installation.



Time flow taps

Time flow valves are available to control water flow directly at the tap outlet. The flow of water is activated by moving the lever, or pressing the button with the hand (usually the thumb) or with the wrist or forearm. They provide a timed flow, and automatically shut off after a preset time. This also economises on water usage.



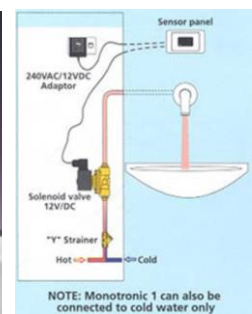
Knee/foot operation of taps

Special lever or pedal tapware can allow a tap to be turned on with the knee or the foot. Water flow can be activated either for a preset period (e.g. 15 seconds) or only while the lever/pedal is depressed by the foot or knee. A single tap is used, with mixed, preset temperature water.



Automatic/sensor taps

Sensor taps are hands-free. An infrared sensor is activated by movement in front of the sensor. The water flow stops when movement ceases, when a second movement occurs near the sensor, or alternatively, after a preset period. The sensor can be located on the basin or in the wall. Electronic touch pads can activate water flow for a preset period of time.



Water temperature regulation

There are devices that can regulate the temperature of the water or stop the water flow if it gets too hot. These are called thermostatic mixer valves and anti-scald devices, and are designed to control the maximum temperature of water. These devices can therefore be useful to help reduce your risk of getting burnt by hot water.

Some devices mix cold water with hot water as it leaves the hot water cylinder. This means that all household hot water is reduced to a safer temperature level.

Other devices are mounted so that they control the water temperature only for specific outlets, e.g. in the shower, bathroom, kitchen or laundry.

Anti-scald devices can also be fitted to the hot water supply pipework. These devices reduce the water flow if a rise in temperature is detected.

These devices can reduce your risk of being scalded by hot water and are recommended if you have poor sensation, slow movements or slow reaction times.

Thermostatic mixers

Thermostatic mixing valves can be mounted at different locations, e.g.

1. Hot water cylinder: As the water comes out of the hot water cylinder, the temperature is regulated. This means that all hot water from this cylinder is regulated.
2. Bathroom area(s): This means that the kitchen and laundry can still have hot water of a higher temperature.
3. For the shower only.

Tempering valve: a mixing valve that is temperature-actuated is used to modify a hot water supply with cold water to provide hot water at a lower temperature at one or more outlets.

Thermostatic mixing valve: where temperature of the water from the mixed water outlet is automatically controlled by a thermostatic element/sensor to a preselected temperature that is suitable for direct contact with the skin. Source: AS / NZS 3500.0, 2003: *Plumbing and drainage – Glossary of terms*



Tempering valve



Thermostatic mixing valve

Things to consider:

- Thermostatic mixing valves are suitable for use with mains pressure water systems only.
- Does the regulated water temperature need to apply to the whole house, or only some areas?
- A plumber needs to install these devices.
- Some gas hot water systems can be preset to a certain temperature.

Contact ILC Tas for more information



Ring 1300 885 886 to speak to a health professional.



Visit our website www.ilctas.asn.au or email ilc@ilctas.asn.au.



Make an appointment to visit the centre at 275 Wellington Street, South Launceston.



Ring us to find out when we will be in your area.

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