

There are hundreds of shower options on the market, and choosing the best one can be a matter of balancing budget and personal preference.

But whether you're looking for a simple hand-held wand, a rain head, or an elaborate setup with body spray and multiple heads, what's inside the wall will ensure that your new system works at its best, says Marc Benoit, owner of Plumbtech Plumbing.

"Shower valves control the water flow – they're the essential components that are quite literally behind-the-scenes," Marc explains. "You never see them, but the right valve can make all the difference in the world."

Even if you're not building a new home or doing a full bathroom upgrade, simply replacing the shower valve can improve water pressure and eliminate the problem of the shower changing temperature when someone flushes a toilet or turns on a tap in another part of the house.

"Shower valve technology has advanced, and fluctuating temperature is a thing of the past," says Marc.

While there are a wide variety of different options, two of the most popular are the pressure balanced valve, and the thermostatic valve. Choosing between them is partly a matter of personal preference, and partly a matter of looking at the existing plumbing system.

Pressure-Balanced Shower Valve

Pressure-balanced valves are the most common shower valves used today.

The valve detects pressure fluctuations in your plumbing system: when a toilet is flushed, for example, there's a sudden drop in the cold water supply while the hot water supply remains at the same pressure. The valve responds by reducing the pressure on the hot water supply, to deliver a near-constant temperature.

Thermostatic Shower Valve

Thermostatic shower valves offer a way to keep the temperature consistent from shower to shower. You simply set the valve to the temperature you like. When you turn on the shower, it automatically produces water at that temperature, eliminating the need to find the "sweet spot" on the temperature spectrum every time you shower.

Thermostatic valves also allow a higher flow rate than pressure balanced valves, letting you incorporate multiple shower heads, rain heads or body sprays to create your perfect shower.

"Shower valves make a big difference, but our clients don't need to worry about the ins and outs of how they work," Marc explains. "We can just outline your best options, and then you can focus on picking the shower system you like best." **DS**

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SHOWER selection

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE GUILBAULT

The right valves ensure peak performance



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