Hey, what's a bidet? [1]

Dear Alice,

What's a bidet?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Bidet (rhymes with "relay," "filet," and "hooray") is a French word and the name of basin-like fixtures, or devices, that propel a gentle stream of water toward your genitals and anal and peri-anal area for the purpose of cleaning. The water mostly wets external areas, and does not mimic enemas or vaginal douching [2] (an activity that's not recommended). Bidets sometimes look like young toilets when situated next to slightly taller, more "developed" conventional ones; you'll find this set-up in many European, Middle Eastern, Latin, and Asian homes and hotels. Bidet equipment can also attach on and in toilets when space, mobility, and price are issues.

Many readers reared outside of the United States may find your question amusing, as in many foreign lands, bidets are as standard as toilet paper. Well, laughter is commonly heard across the Atlantic when Americans mistake these genital soakers for a foot massage, water fountain, laundry washer, or even a toilet. Why don't bidets grace most American bathrooms? Well, bidets are dedicated solely to helping people better bathe their vulvas, anususes, penises, and the regions around them. This requires paying close attention to, and often touching, one's genitalia after urination, bowel movements, et. al.? something many Americans find dirty, sinful, embarrassing, or just plain weird.

"Get over it!," say health care providers who cheer that bidets clean better than toilet paper, help prevent vaginitis, urinary tract infections, and other ailments, and, leave things cleaner and fresher smelling down there after sex and during menstruation. Bidets are a huge help for people with hemorrhoids, diarrhea, rashes, and infections, which toilet tissue can aggravate and/or spread. Bidets can also help mentally challenged people, the elderly, pregnant women, post-surgical patients, people who are paralyzed, and others for whom standing, reaching, bending, and other movements are painful, difficult, or impossible.

Times and toilet habits are a-changing; more new homes in the States come equipped with bidets due to increased travel, immigration, and availability of information about genital hygiene and the hardware that promotes it.
Have a nice (bi)det,

Alice!

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