

I was so careful, Solitary confinement was a good place to be during the heights of the pandemic. Ambulances appeared multiple times daily and carted away sheet covered lumps. I wore my mask and never left my cell. I even double-masked during mealtimes for the 15 second exchange receiving then returning my tray.

After taking bird baths in my cell sink for months and washing ~~my~~ ^{my} basketball sized afro in it, I relented. I craved a proper bathing.

Per protocol, I waited at my cell door at 10am to request a 'shower, please'. He returned with a partner. She stripped me and they escorted me to the shower area - handcuffed. I stare at the 3 coffin sized, unventilated shower doors for 42 people. Door #1 is ice cold only, #2 boiling hot only and #3 is broken. It's winter, I opt for the popular choice, #2. It was moist and steam filled from the previous occupant. My handcuffs were removed and I saturated the telephone booth sized shower with watered-down non-bleach. The quick scalding left my skin red as I waited over 30 minutes for staff to return me to my cell.

The next day, I had no sense of smell nor taste. My body felt like I'd been in the ring fighting the entire NFL roster. I had nightmares of being the next body on the stretcher.

Staff whispered 'we CANT keep testing y'all it'll drive up the numbers.'

I eagerly returned to my bird baths. After 2 battles with covid and a delayed vaccination follow-up. Im still having long covid effects.
The shower wasn't worth it.

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