Use Water Wisely Indoors

Water Conservation
Doing Our Share

Most people use 70 to 90 gallons of water per day indoors. While it may be difficult to imagine how all that water is used, a quick look often shows that much is wasted due to leaks or careless habits.

From the kitchen, to the bathroom, to the laundry room, changing your habits can save money on your water, sewer and energy bill and help conserve a vital resource. Water conservation is not just for emergencies. Water conservation today saves you money on your next water bill, reduces the cost for developing new supplies, and leaves more water in the rivers for fish and recreation.

The key to using water efficiently is knowing your water use habits.

- Do you take long, hot showers?
- Do you leave the water running while brushing your teeth?
- Do you flush the toilet needlessly?
- Do you turn off faucets completely so they don't drip?
- Do you have plumbing leaks?

Water conservation actions involve both changing habits and replacing old, inefficient plumbing fixtures. Here are some suggestions:

Leaks

Check every faucet in your home for leaks. Just a slow drip can waste 15 to 20 gallons a day. Fix it and you will save almost 6,000 gallons a year.

Check for hidden leaks in your water system. Turn off all faucets in and around your house, then locate your water meter and check the reading. Wait 15 minutes without turning any water on, then check the meter again. If the reading has changed, you have a leak.

Showers and Baths

A 5-minute shower uses from 15 to 40 gallons of water. A low volume showerhead, however, uses only 12 to 15 gallons for a 5-minute shower. Low volume showerheads are inexpensive and can pay for themselves in water, sewer and energy savings in less than a year.

Shower or bath? It depends on how long you stand in the shower and how you fill the tub. A partially filled tub uses far less water than a long shower... and a short shower uses less than a full tub.

Toilets

Flush only when needed. Do not use the toilet for discarding tissue, gum wrappers, cigarette butts, spiders and so on. Put a water displacement device inside the tank of every toilet. You can make one with a plastic bottle of water weighted down with pebbles.

Check your toilets for leaks. Drop a dye tablet or a teaspoon of food coloring in the tank. If the color appears in the bowl after 15 minutes, replace the "flapper" valve.

While Shaving/Tooth brushing

Leave the water off when brushing your teeth or shaving. Turn it on again to rinse. A faucet left running wide open puts about 3 to 5 gallons a minute down the drain.

Kitchen

Make sure the dishwasher is full before you turn it on. For most dishwashers, you do not need to rinse the dishes first—just scrape them clean. When you wash dishes by hand, don't leave the water running. Use a sink or dish pan full of wash water and one of rinse water.

Keep a jug of water in the refrigerator for drinking so you don't need to let the faucet run while waiting for the water to get colder. When waiting for hot water from the faucet, save the cool water for other uses. When preparing vegetables and foods, put a stopper in the sink instead of letting the faucet run.

Laundry

A washing machine can use 40 gallons of water or more– whether you wash a full load or one sock! Use water more efficiently by washing full loads. Studies have shown that front-loading machines reduce water use by up to 40% or 16 gallons per load.

Another energy (and water) saving tip--Save hot water and energy by using detergents formulated for cold water washing. Cold water is gentler on synthetics and delicate fibers.

Remodeling

If you are remodeling, shop for appliances that are designed to reduce water use. Many manufacturers offer washing machines, dishwashers, toilets and showerheads that can help you save water.

Older appliances typically consume more water. For example, toilets made before 1982 use 5 gallons of water per flush. Those installed between 1983 and 1993 use about 3.5 gallons per flush. The newest toilets, mandated by federal law in 1994, use 1.6 gallons (or less) per flush.

Indoor Water Use, State of Oregon Water Resources Department
How to Save Water at Home, City of Albuquerque, New Mexico