

CONSERVING WATER INDOORS



About 35% of the water we use each year is used inside the home, the other 65% goes to irrigate our landscape. Although it is important to have the latest water efficient equipment (faucets, toilets, washing machines) in our homes, our ability to reduce the amount of water we use is more dependent on our willingness to change our habits. The *Water Wise* Program has identified several areas where practicing some simple water saving habits can lead to significant reductions in the amount of water we use inside the home.

Practice Good Water-Use Habits

Kitchen

Run the dishwasher with a full load to save water, energy, detergent, and money. Use the dishwasher's short wash cycle if your dishes are only lightly soiled.

Dry scrape dishes instead of rinsing them and do not pre-rinse dishes if you are using a dishwasher. If you are washing dishes by hand, fill the sink with soapy water instead of letting the water run continuously. Soak pans rather than scrubbing them while running water.

Rinse produce in a pan of cold water instead of letting water run. Transfer frozen foods to the refrigerator to defrost the night before you need them instead of letting water run over them.

Keep a container of water in the refrigerator rather than running tap water until it is cold enough to drink.

Laundry Room

Wash only full loads. We have demonstrated in the *Water Wise* Program that people have a habit of running the clothes washing machine 1-2 times every day of the week, which wastes about 40 gallons of water every day.

Match the load setting with the amount of laundry to be washed if you must wash partial loads. Use the shortest wash cycle for lightly soiled loads as it uses less water than other cycles.

Bathroom

Don't use the toilet as a trash can for paper and facial tissues.

Turn the water off when you're not using it. Run water just to wet and rinse the toothbrush instead of allowing the water to run while brushing your teeth. Apply the same idea when washing your hands.

Take shorter showers instead of a bath. A 5 minute shower uses about 10 gallons of water, a 15 minute shower uses at least 30 gallons. Use water-efficient shower heads, which are designed to use far less water.

Install Water-Efficient Appliances

Toilets: Toilets are by far the main source of water use in the home, accounting for about 30% of indoor water use. They also happen to be a major source of leaks and inefficiency. A typical toilet will use about 1.6 gallons per flush, but you can install high efficiency and dual-flush designs that will use less than 1 gallon. Over the course of your lifetime, you will likely flush the toilet 140,000 times. That's a lot of water.

Install a dual-flush toilet, which gives you the option to use about half the amount of water if you choose. A far less expensive alternative is to replace the flush mechanism in your existing toilet tank with a dual-flush mechanism that accomplishes the same low water flush. You can obtain the tank mechanism at most home improvement stores for about \$15.

A leaky toilet can waste 200 gallons or more a day, and it is estimated that nearly 20% of all toilets leak. You can check for leaks by removing the tank lid after filling stops and look for a visual leak or listen for water running.

Check toilet parts regularly. Some of the bowl cleaners we like to use actually attack the rubber parts in the tank and cause premature failure. Replace worn parts with good quality parts as necessary, and retest to make sure the leak has been fixed.

Showers: Take shorter showers. A 5 minute shower uses only about 10 gallons of water, a 15 minute shower uses about 30 gallons of water. This compares to a bathtub, however, which can use up to 70 gallons of water.

Installing a water efficient shower head is one of the single most efficient water saving steps you can take inside your home.

Sinks: Installing faucet aerators on sinks is a simple, inexpensive way to save water. The faucet's efficiency can double without sacrificing performance.

Faucet leaks are usually caused by worn washers or “O” rings, which are inexpensive and easily replaced. Note the faucet brand and take the original part with you to a home improvement store.

Washing Machines: The *Water Wise* Program has demonstrated that the washing machine can be a major user of water in the home. There are two issues with washing machines. Of primary concern is the experience that most people like to run a load of washing every day of the week. If people could plan this activity to wash cloths no more than is really needed, substantial water could be saved – as much as 1000 gallons each month.

The other opportunity is in the design of the washing machine itself. High efficiency, front-end loading machines use 35-55% less water and 50% less energy. They also require less detergent, rinse more thoroughly, are less abrasive on clothes, and can fit larger capacity loads in the same size drum.

Dishwashers: High-efficiency dishwashers use about 7 gallons per load, but some use as little as 4.5 gallons of water. Since they are typically run only 2-3 times a week, they are not a significant use of water.

