

# Saving Water Indoors

**Use what you need,  
need what you use**

We need to save water every way we can. If we don't conserve, we're pouring water — and money — down the drain. The average Floridian uses about 124 gallons of water each day. You can reduce your water consumption by taking just a few simple steps. So stop the leaks, slow the flow and use water wisely!

## Seek the Leak

Leaks are the biggest water waster. Even a small faucet leak can waste 300 or more gallons of water per month! Take a few minutes to find out if you have a leak in your home.



4. If you have a well, listen for the pump to kick on and off while the water is not in use. If it does, you have a leak.
5. If you cannot find the leak using the tips in this brochure, you should consult a plumber.

## Use Your Water Meter to Check for Leaks

1. Turn off all faucets and water-using appliances and make sure no one uses water during the testing period. Remember to wait for the hot water heater and ice cube makers to refill, and for regeneration of water softeners.
2. Go to your water meter and record the current reading. Wait 30 minutes. (Remember: no water should be used during this period.)
3. Read the meter again. If the reading has changed, you have a leak.



# Toilets

## Check for Leaks

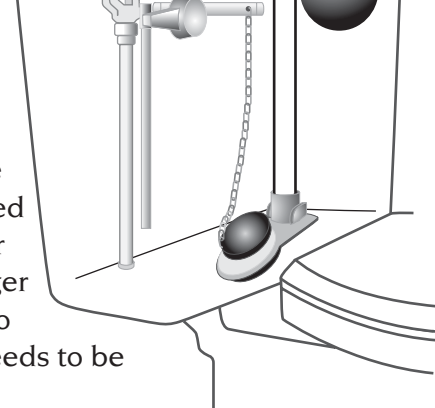
Leaks inside your toilet can waste up to 100 gallons per day. Some leaks are silent, some produce a running water sound and others may be visible as a small trickle running from the rim to the water in the bowl.

To detect silent leaks, remove toilet tank lid and any colored cleaning agents. Flush to clear water in the bowl. Add dye tablets, leak detector fluid or a few drops of food coloring to the tank. If the tank is leaking, color will appear in the bowl within 10 to 15 minutes. Flush as soon as the test is complete.

## Fix Leaks

If your toilet is leaking, try the following procedures:

- Water level in the tank should be about one-half inch below the top of the overflow tube in the middle of the tank. To adjust the water level, use a screwdriver to adjust the screw on the end of the ballcock float arm or bend the float arm up or down (very gently) until the correct water level is achieved.
- If you need to jiggle the handle to stop the water running after a flush, you should oil, tighten or replace the flush handle. To tighten, use an adjustable wrench to tighten the nut attached to the handle on the inside of the tank.

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- Check for holes and cracks in the float ball. If the ball is filled with water or no longer appears to float, it needs to be replaced. Replace by unscrewing it from its tubing and screwing another on in its place.
  - Adjust lift chain so it hangs straight from handle lever with about one-half inch slack.
  - Check the rubber flapper or flush valve at the bottom of the tank. If it is worn or corroded, it needs to be cleaned or replaced.
  - If the water won't shut off at all, replace both the flapper and the ballcock.
  - If these simple procedures don't stop the leak, you should call your plumber.

## Install Low-Flow

Since the mid-1990s, all new toilets have been redesigned to conserve water, using 1.6 gallons of water per flush. Older models use 3 gallons or more per flush. If your toilet is not a newer water-saving fixture, consider purchasing one.

# Faucets



## Check for Leaks

The next place to check for leaks is your sink and bathtub faucets. Water losses caused by dripping faucets can range from several gallons to hundreds of gallons of water per day. Check faucets regularly for leaks at the faucet head and seepage at the base and its connections.

## Fix Leaks

Whether a two-handled model or a single-handled model faucet, leaks are repaired by replacing washers and by tightening or repacking the faucet stem. Do-it-yourselfers can find a variety of repair kits in local home improvement and hardware stores. Most kits contain detailed instructions and a listing of necessary tools. If preferred, a plumber can make repairs.

## Install Low-Flow

If you don't already have low-flow fixtures, you will want to replace them. To find out if you have low-flow, check the amount of water flowing from each faucet. You can do this by opening the faucet and allowing the water to flow into a container for 10 seconds. Multiply the amount of water in the container by six to determine the per minute flow. If your existing faucet flows above 2.5 gallons per minute, install a low-flow faucet. For a bathroom faucet, a 1.5-gallons-per-minute

flow will provide sufficient water for personal hygiene needs. For a kitchen faucet, you may want a 2.5-gallons-per-minute flow to make sure the flow of water is enough to wash and rinse dishes.

If installing low-flow faucets is not practical, install faucet aerators and flow restrictors on all faucets.



Faucet aerators are circular screened disks, usually made of metal, that are screwed onto the head of the faucet to reduce flow. Aerators for kitchen faucets are available with a variety of spray patterns and flow-control features. Faucet aerators require periodic cleaning of grit and scale buildup that may inhibit flow.

# Showers

## Check for Leaks

Dripping showerheads can waste 75 to several hundred gallons of water a week, depending on the size of the drip. If the showerhead is leaking, make sure it is screwed tightly. Also, remember to check the washer for wear. If you need a new washer, you can get one at your local hardware store or from your plumber.

## Fix Leaks

To fix a leaky showerhead, you need an adjustable wrench or pliers and joint sealer or tape. Follow these steps:

- Turn off the water supply.
- Use the adjustable wrench to remove the old showerhead. (Use a cloth between the showerhead and the jaws of the wrench to avoid scratching the fixture.)
- Clean the threads to remove old joint sealer.
- Apply joint sealer or tape, using package instructions.
- Use the adjustable wrench to install the showerhead.
- Turn the water supply on and test the showerhead.



## Install Low-Flow

By timing your shower to less than five minutes and installing low-flow showerheads, you can save water. The older the showerhead, the more water it uses. New low-volume showerheads deliver 2.5 gallons of water per minute. Older high-volume fixtures can deliver as much as 8 gallons per minute. Pressures have been adjusted to the low-flow fixtures to deliver as good a shower as the higher flow showerheads. To install a new showerhead, follow the directions above for fixing showerhead leaks. To determine if your showerheads and faucets flow at recommended rates, call the Southwest Florida Water Management District at (352) 796-7211 or 1-800-423-1476, ext. 4612, and request a free shower flow bag.

# Additional tips

## Slow the Flow

Here are more tips for conserving water inside your home:

### *In the bathroom:*

- Flush less — remember the toilet is not an ashtray or wastebasket.
- While brushing teeth, shaving, etc., turn off the water.
- When cold water will do, avoid using hot water.
- Take shorter showers — 5 minutes or less.
- In the shower, wet yourself down, turn the water off, lather up, then turn the water on to rinse off soap.
- Use less water for bathing — close the drain first and fill tub only one-third full. That initial burst of cold water will be warmed by the hot water as the tub fills.



### *In the kitchen:*

- Operate the dishwasher only when you have a full load.
- Scrape, don't rinse, your dishes before loading in the dishwasher.
- When purchasing a dishwasher, consider a water-efficient model.
- Use your garbage disposal sparingly and start composting your kitchen waste.
- Thaw frozen food in the refrigerator or microwave, not under running water.
- Store drinking water in the refrigerator instead of letting the tap run while you wait for cool water to flow.
- When washing dishes by hand, fill one sink or basin with soapy water and fill the rinsing sink to one-third or one-half full — avoid letting the water run continuously in the rinsing sink.



# Additional tips

## ***In the laundry:***

- For washers with variable settings for water volume, select the minimum amount required per load.
- If load size cannot be set, operate the washer with full loads only.
- Use the shortest wash cycle for lightly soiled loads; normal and permanent press wash cycles use more water.
- Check hoses regularly for leaks.
- Pretreat stains to avoid rewashing.

## ***Additional tips:***

- Install instant water heaters in bathrooms and in the kitchen so you don't have to let the water run while it heats up.
- Insulate your water pipes — you'll get hot water faster, plus avoid wasting water while it heats up.



- Avoid installing a water-to-air heat pump or air-conditioning system — newer air-to-air models are just as efficient and do not waste water.
- Install water-softening systems only when necessary; save water and salt by only running the minimum amount of regenerations necessary to maintain water softness; turn softeners off while on vacation.
- Never put water down the drain when there may be another use for it, such as watering a plant or cleaning.
- Replace leaky drain plugs in sinks and bathtubs.

For more information, call the Southwest Florida Water Management District at 1-800-423-1476, ext. 4757, or visit our web site at [WaterMatters.org](http://WaterMatters.org)

This information will be made available in accessible formats upon request. Please contact the Communications Department at (352) 796-7211 or 1-800-423-1476 (FL only), ext.4757; TDD only at 1-800-231-6103 (FL only).