

Water Conservation Tips for Consumers

Bathroom Toilets

Toilet flushing consumes nearly half of the daily household consumption using about 5 – 7 gallons per flush. Your toilet is not a wastebasket – don't use to flush away cigarette butts or Kleenex. Toilet dams save about two gallons per flush. Most new toilets presently available on the market are engineered for low volume and use about 3 1/2 gallons per flush. Put a few drops of food coloring in your tank. If colored water shows in the bowl without flushing, there is a leak and repairs are needed.

Bathing

Bathing usually consumes the second greatest quantity of water in the home. A shower generally uses less water than a bath. Do your showering and hair washing in one step. Fill the tub 1/4 full. This is enough to cover an adult's body or float a child's toy. Most showers can be fitted with flow restrictor or low-volume head to conserve water. Don't turn the shower on until you're ready to step in.

Sink

Don't leave water running while washing your face, shaving or brushing your teeth. An electric razor uses less energy that it takes to heat up the water for razor shaving.

Kitchen and Laundry

Twenty-five percent of the daily household water use occurs in the kitchen and laundry with much of this water being wasted.

Cooking

Remove frozen foods from freezer before you're ready to use them so you won't have to use running water to hasten thawing. Always use lids on pots and pans. Use the smallest amount of water possible in cooking to save both water and nutrients. Most frozen vegetables require about 1/2 to 1 cup of water, not half a saucepan. Rather than letting the water run while peeling vegetables, rinse them briefly at the beginning and end of the chore. Don't let the faucet run for a cold drink. Keep a jug of water cooling in the refrigerator.

Washing Dishes

When washing dishes by hand, use a stopper in the sink and don't rinse with running water. Use low-sudsing detergents – they require less rinsing. Adding 1/4 to 1/2 cup of vinegar to your wash water cuts grease more readily than hot water alone. Run your dishwasher only when you have a full load, since each load uses from 12 to 17 gallons of water. Use the prewash, rinse-hold and scrub cycles of your dishwasher only when necessary.

Laundry

If your washer has a variable load control, always adjust water level to fit the size of the load. This saves both water and the energy needed to heat the extra hot water. Run your washer when you have a full load. Remember that in soft water clothes get cleaner and require less detergent and less rinse water. When buying a new washing machine, look for models with water or energy-saving controls.

All Around the House

Check every faucet for leaks. Just a slow drip can waste 15 to 20 gallons a day. Use a broom, not the hose, to clean the garage, sidewalks, and driveway. Wash the car from a bucket. Use the hose only to rinse it off afterwards. Insulate the hot water heater, pay special attention to the insulation qualities of the shell. Avoid buying a larger tank than is necessary for your needs.

Lawn and Yard

Morning is the best time to water most lawns. Before 10:00 AM is best of all because rising heat later on tends to steal a lot of water by evaporation. Another benefit is that grass leaves have a chance to dry off quickly. Evening or night time watering leaves the grass wet and can allow lawn diseases to develop. A lush green lawn requires 1 to 1 1/2 inches of water a week. Water three times a week, applying about 1/2 inch at a time. Keep in mind the amount of rainfall that might fall on your yard and adjust your watering schedule accordingly. If you let your grass grow to about 1 1/2 to 2 inches in the summer, water loss will be reduced because the blades will provide shade for the roots. Avoid watering when windy or in the heat of the day. Don't allow sprinklers to run unattended. Use a timer as a reminder when it is time to move or turn off the sprinkler. Lawns that are frequently aerated absorb water better. High nitrogen fertilizers stimulate lawn growth and increase water requirements. Thatch build-up in a lawn can create a rapid run-off situation. Every spring the lawn should be raked and dead grass removed. Sprinklers throwing large drops in a flat pattern are more effective than those with fine, high sprays. Forget about watering streets, walks and driveways. They don't grow a thing. Mulch shrubs and other plantings so the soil holds moisture longer. When possible, flood irrigate vegetables and flower gardens rather than using sprinklers. Irrigation allows deeper soaking with less water. Sprinklers result in high evaporation loss of water.