

# 13 Ways to Conserve Water at Home and Lessen Wastewater Discharge into the Environment

## 1. Evaluate your water habits.

Have a family discussion about water use and ways to cut down. For example:

- Do you leave the water running while brushing your teeth?
- Do you take extra-long showers?

There are simple things you and your family members can do to start saving water today!

## 2. Look for leaks and repair them right away.

Most leaks are easy to detect and repair.

- For sinks, check faucets and pipes for dripping water. Replace washers, and repair or replace fixtures, if needed.
- For toilets, add food coloring to the tank water, don't flush, and check the bowl in 15 minutes. Color in the toilet bowl indicates there is a leak.

## 3. Check your water system for leaks.

This is easy to do. Just follow these steps:

- Locate your water meter. Read the meter first at night, after the day's water use has ended, and again in the morning before water use begins.
- Subtract the first reading from the second reading to determine how much water, if any, leaked out.
- Look for leaks. Find them by checking pipes, hoses and connections. Have any leaks repaired right away.

## 4. Install water-saving devices.

If you don't already have water efficient or low-flow fixtures, you can cut your water use with:

- Aerators (devices that mix air with water)
- Low-flow fixtures such as shower heads, flow restrictors or cut-off valves
- Displacement devices which reduce the amount of water used in older toilets

Make sure all devices are properly installed.

## 5. Save water while preparing food.

- Use a brush and bowl of water to clean food instead of letting the water run
- Thaw frozen food in the refrigerator or microwave, not under running water
- Reuse water when you can. For example, when you cook vegetables, save cooking water for soup stock.

## 6. Flush the toilet only when necessary.

- Don't use the toilet to dispose of trash.
- Consider installing a low-flow toilet. Look for a toilet with a WaterSense label on it.

## 7. Know the proper setting on your washer.

To help lower your water and energy bills, choose a water and energy saving model if buying a new washer. Be sure it has features such as:

- a load size selector
- variable water temperature controls

Use the load selector to match the water level to the size of the load. Presoak heavily soiled items.

## 8. Wash dishes wisely.

- If you use a dishwasher, wash only full loads.
- If you wash dishes by hand:
  - Scrape dishes, but do not pre-rinse.
  - Soak pots and pans before washing.
  - Don't run water continuously.
  - Limit your use of the garbage disposal...better yet, compost.

**9. Be efficient in the shower and bath.**

- Plug the drain before you run water for baths
- Take shallow baths.
- Catch cold water in a bucket for later use, if you run water to get it hot.
- Keep showers short with pressure at low force.
- Turn off water while soaping up and shampooing.

**10. Use less water to clean your home.**

- Use a pail or basin instead of running water.
- Use a sponge mop instead of a string mop. Sponge mops use less water and take less water to keep clean.
- Presoak items such as grills and oven parts overnight, then scrub with an abrasive brush or pad.

**11. Check hoses and irrigation systems.**

You should also:

- Check hoses and connectors and repair or replace any leaky parts or sections.
- Consider a drip irrigation system. It allows water to slowly soak down to the roots to help reduce evaporation.
- Keep irrigation systems running efficiently.
- Install shut-off devices such as rain or soil-moisture sensors.
- Repair, replace or adjust sprinkler heads.
- Check often for leaks and perform other maintenance at least annually.

**12. Minimize watering outdoors.**

- Water when the sun is down to avoid evaporation and when it is not windy.
- Water slowly, deeply and as little as possible.
- Let grass grow taller in hot weather.
- Use mulch in the garden and around shrubs to retain moisture.
- Plant shrubs and other plants that don't require a lot of watering. Consider alternatives such as native grasses.
- Obey any watering restriction in your community.

**13. Maintain pools and hot tubs.**

- Don't overfill. This will help reduce splashing and spilling.
- Use a cover to slow evaporation. This will also keep water cleaner.
- Check walls, filtration systems and inlets and repair when needed.