

# Conserving Water in the home

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## Average Water Use

National averages show that a typical household of four persons uses water as follows:

<u>Use</u>	<u>Gallons per day</u>
Dishwashing	15
Cooking, drinking	12
Laundry	35
Bathing	80
Bathroom sink	8
Toilet	100
Utility sink	5
Total family use	255 gallons or 34.09 cubic feet

## How to Reduce Water Use

Changing household practices can reduce water use without posing a threat to family health or comfort. Reduce the number of toilet flushes each day or install water displacement devices in the toilet tank; brush teeth dry or use water only to rinse the brush; keep a covered container of drinking water in the refrigerator rather than running the tap until water is cold.

## Bathing

A major source of excess water use is in the shower: People are inclined to shower more frequently than necessary and to use the shower as a place to relax. Showering saves water only when you limit the time. Two minutes or less is sufficient to get clean. A water saving way to shower is to get wet, turn off the water, lather up, and wash, then turn the water back on to rinse. This could also be used for shampooing your hair. As a general rule, only certain body parts, the axillary region-underarms, pubic areas, feet, hands, and face require daily washing.

A shower can use from 5 to 15 gallons of water per minute. You can reduce this to 3 gallons by installing a low-flow shower head or shower insert. If the shower is in the tub, close the drain so all the water stays in the tub. This water can be used to flush the toilet. A bathtub holds 25 to 30 gallons when full. Use as little as possible.

We don't need to bathe as often as most people do--2 or 3 times a week is adequate; maintain personal cleanliness with soap and water washing; families can



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share showers or baths to conserve water; and alternate activities such as massage, stretching exercises, or a quiet place to contemplate can replace the shower as a place of relaxation and retreat.

### The Toilet

The toilet is a major water user. Greatest savings can be achieved by pouring a bucket of "gray water," salvaged from the bathtub or sink, into the toilet bowl instead of using water from the toilet tank. Depending on size, toilet flushing uses from 5 to 7 gallons per flush. It is not necessary to flush after every use. Reduce odor by adding a little vinegar, liquid detergent, or chlorine bleach to the bowl.

Put plastic bottles filled with water in the toilet tank to cut down on the water used if "gray water" is not reused for flushing. Place one-quart capacity bottles in positions that do not interfere with toilet operation. Glass bottles of various shapes and sizes might be tried, but beware of glass breakage that could cause problems in the pipes. Plastic bottles are safer. It is also possible to bend the metal rod to lower the position of the float ball in the toilet tank. The float ball cuts off water when it floats up to top position.

A toilet requires a certain amount of water to flush properly, so experiment to find the correct water level. Since plastic bottles hold a measured amount of water, they can be used to determine the amount of water needed (turn off the water valve below the toilet before removing the bottles, so the water level will not change while the float rod is being bent). Use both hands to bend the rod gently.

Sinks are obvious places to catch water rather than letting it go down the drain. To save water, place a bowl or basin under the faucet. If the water is clean, use it for watering houseplants. If there is soap, detergent, or other contaminants in the water, store it in a bucket for toilet flushing.

Another way to save is to reduce the amount of water coming into the house, by adjusting the pressure-reducing valves installed as part of the plumbing system. This is normally located at the house control shut-off valve. Pressure can be lowered as long as water-using fixtures continue to operate efficiently.

### Common Sense

Common sense operation of water faucets will reduce water consumption. Turning water off instead of leaving it running will save many gallons: For example, in tooth brushing, about 10 gallons can be saved; in shaving, about 19 gallons; in dishwashing, about 25 gallons by using a rinse pan; in washing hands, 1 gallon can be saved by filling the basin.

### Repair Leaks

Repair leaky faucets and toilets. Many gallons of water are wasted by very small leaks. Instructions for repair are contained in Extension Fact Sheet No. 192, "Home Plumbing Problems."