

Save Water and Energy

■ Habits ■ Devices ■ Reclamation

Energy fact sheet **16**

Improving the efficiency of the ways you use water in your home can save you money as well as help protect a valuable natural resource. Here are a few tips to help you use water more wisely.

Start with easy, low-cost measures

Fix Leaks. A small faucet leak can quickly add up to hundreds of gallons of water wasted down the drain. Fix leaky faucets and other plumbing fixtures quickly.

Do full loads. Operate water-using appliances, such as dishwashers and clothes washers, with full loads or with water-saving settings. Using energy saving features such as cold water rinse or air dry will further decrease operating costs.

Avoid wasteful habits. Sweep outdoor walks rather than hosing them off. Close sink basins to catch water rather than letting it flow down the drain while shaving, washing dishes and other uses.

Don't use toilets for trash cans. A standard toilet uses 3.5 gallons of water per flush. It takes energy to purify water before it reaches your home as well as to process sewage after it leaves.

Saving energy and water

Showerheads. An average family of four spends about \$400 a year for electricity or propane, or \$200 for natural gas, to heat water for bathing, laundry, and other domestic uses. Much of this water is used for showers. Installing low-flow showerheads that use less than 2.5 gallons per minute will save you money. A good fixture will save water and provide a great shower. Check with *Consumer Reports* and other publications for product reviews.

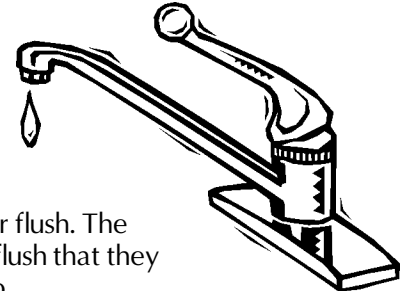
Insulate your water heater. While you are considering water saving options, don't forget to wrap your water heater with an insulating jacket. You can buy a jacket from a local hardware or building supply store for less than \$20. It will save you many times its cost in energy savings.

Keeping the temperature of your water heater set to approximately 120°F can also save money. Some units are set at 140°F or higher which wastes energy and can cause serious injury from scalding.

The Next Step

Water saving devices. Federal plumbing regulations require that all new toilets be water saving models. These fixtures use

1.6 gallons of water per flush. The 2 gallons of water per flush that they save can quickly add up.



For some homes that savings can be over \$60 per year on water bills. The water savings can quickly repay the cost of new, modern plumbing fixtures.

Outdoors

Xeriscaping. During warm weather, outdoor watering of your home's landscape can be costly. However, good landscape design and maintenance practices can dramatically reduce water needs. Xeriscaping is landscaping that requires little maintenance and uses sensible plant materials for the local environment. Your local Cooperative Extension Agency is a great source of information on water wise practices for your landscape.

Graywater. Much of the water that goes down our drains is relatively clean. Waste water from sinks, bathtubs and showers and washing machines can be captured, filtered and used on landscapes. Check with knowledgeable professionals before using graywater.

Rainwater Harvesting. Catching rainwater can be as simple as a barrel beneath your gutter or as complex as a catchment system with a cistern. Either way, you will catch water that should be directed away from the house and use it on your landscaping where it is needed.