

Being waterwise in the bathroom, laundry and kitchen

Whether we have an abundance of water or whether we are in drought, we all need to think about how much water we use, how we are using it, and what types of contaminants and detergents we are flushing away with our wastewater.

You can help to safeguard our water and our environment by making some simple changes around your home.

How much water do you use?

One of the first steps you can take is to find out how much water you really use. Do this by:

- ◆ checking your rates notice. In some areas your local council will provide you with water use information on your rates notice. This can include how much water your household uses per day and the daily average use for households within your local area.
- ◆ checking your water meter. Write down your meter reading and check it again seven days later around the same time of day. The difference between the two readings is your weekly water consumption. Divide this by seven for an estimate of your daily use for your household. To identify how much water you use in your household per person per day, divide the daily use by the number of people in your house.
- ◆ undertaking a home water use audit. Contact your local council for a copy of the home waterwise quiz brochure.

Once you know how much water you use, contact your local council to find out whether there is a voluntary water target in your local area. If one doesn't exist, set your own! Your aim is to use less water so make sure you set an achievable target.

Remember, by saving water you will also save:

- ◆ energy—it takes energy to treat, transfer and heat water. The less water you use, the less energy you use and the less greenhouse gases you create
- ◆ the environment—the less wastewater you generate, the less contaminants and detergents you release into our rivers and oceans.



How do you read your water meter?

A water meter measures the amount of water that each property uses. It will generally be located towards the front of a property. Most are at or below ground level with a metal or plastic lid.

If you live in a unit or apartment block, there may not be an individual water meter for each residence.

There are a range of different water meters in use across the state. The black numbers always register kilolitres (kL; thousands of litres), while the red numbers or dials register litres or parts of litres.

For example:



This water meter reading indicates that 452 953 litres of water has been used since this meter was installed.

Read only the first three red numbers or dials. If there is a fourth red number or dial this indicates tenths of a litre. Numbers are read from left to right, while dials are read in a clockwise direction.

If you have trouble reading your water meter, contact your local council.



Bathroom

Toilet

Up to 16 per cent of household water is flushed down the toilet.

- ◆ Unnecessary flushing is one of the biggest wasters of water. Don't flush needlessly, and never flush items other than toilet paper down the toilet.
- ◆ Use the half-flush option on dual-flush toilets.
- ◆ Replace your older-style toilet with a 4-star dual-flush system. This can save you up to 8 litres of water with every flush.
- ◆ If this is not practical, try reducing the volume of water you use with each flush. You can do this by installing a flow restrictor or by putting a bottle filled with water in the cistern.
- ◆ Use tank water to flush. Talk to your plumber about having your rainwater tank internally plumbed to your toilet.

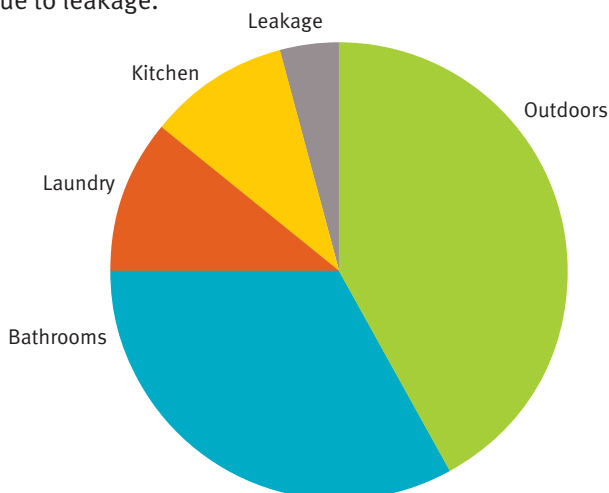
Showers, baths and basins

A standard shower can use 20 litres of water per minute. To use less water in the shower, try the following:

- ◆ Install a water-efficient shower head. A 3-star rated shower head will use no more than 9 litres of water per minute.
- ◆ Take a shorter shower. Shorter showers will not only save water but will help to save on the energy associated with heating the water.
- ◆ Insulate your hot water pipes. This means you will not need to wait as long for the hot water to flow through—saving you both water and energy.
- ◆ Make sure your hot water system thermostat is not set too high. Adding cold water to reduce the temperature of very hot water wastes both water and energy.
- ◆ Use a bucket to catch water while the shower warms up. You can then reuse this water on your garden.

Where do you use your water?

In a typical household 35–55 per cent of water is used outdoors, 30–37 per cent in the bathroom, 10–13 per cent in the laundry, 9–13 per cent in the kitchen and 1–10 per cent is due to leakage.



For baths and basins:

- ◆ use a plug when washing your hands and face
- ◆ turn off the tap while cleaning your teeth or shaving
- ◆ use as little water as possible in the bath. Put the plug in before you turn on the tap and fill the bath to less than a third. You may also like to bath small children together.

Laundry

The laundry is a place where you not only use a lot of water but you also use energy and detergents.

The best way to save water in the laundry is to make sure that you select the right washing machine. Select one that has a water rating of 4 stars or more. This will usually mean a front-loading washing machine. On average, front-loading washing machines use up to 50 per cent less water, 35 per cent less detergent and 30 per cent less energy than top loaders.

Here are some other changes you can make to your laundry habits:

- ◆ If you stop using your washing machine every day, you can sort and wash bigger loads more efficiently.
- ◆ Pre-treat stains before you wash. This will reduce the chances of having to rewash.
- ◆ Make sure that everyone picks up and sorts the clothes they wear each day. That way, clean clothes won't get washed just because they are left lying on the floor.
- ◆ If you are washing clothes by hand, use only as much water as you need in the sink or bucket. Reuse this water in your garden.
- ◆ Divert greywater from your washing machine for immediate use on your garden, but don't use it on your vegetables. Also consider using biodegradable, low-phosphorous, low-sodium and low-nitrogen detergents, which are better for the garden.



Kitchen

There are many ways to save water in the kitchen.

Did you know that a 5-star water-efficient dishwasher uses as little as 7 litres of water? This means that a water-efficient dishwasher will use less water than washing dishes by hand. You can save even more water by thinking about how you use your water-efficient dishwasher. Make sure you:

- ◆ only use the dishwasher when you have a full load
- ◆ scrape your plates clean instead of pre-rinsing your dishes under the tap.

Non-water efficient dishwashers can use up to 25 litres of water a cycle. If you have this type of dishwasher, you will save more water if you wash your dishes by hand.

If you hand-wash your dishes, don't rinse them under running water. A running kitchen tap can use up to 15 litres of water a minute.

- ◆ If you have two sinks, half-fill the second with rinsing water. If you only have one sink, rinse the washed dishes in a pan of hot water.
- ◆ Don't use running water to wash your vegetables or to defrost food. Instead, wash your vegetables in a bowl and place your frozen food in the fridge to thaw overnight.
- ◆ Scrape your dishes and soak your pots and pans to remove food rather than rinsing them under running water.
- ◆ Garbage disposal units can use up to 6 litres of water a day and also put extra rubbish into the sewage. Rather than putting your food scraps down the drain, put them into compost or a worm farm.
- ◆ Encourage your children to empty their water bottles onto your garden or pot plants instead of down the sink.

Check for leaks

A lot of water around the home can be lost because of leaking pipes and dripping taps. Just one slowly dripping tap can waste 9000 litres of water a year, while a visibly leaking toilet can waste more than 60 000 litres.

Make sure that you turn all your taps off properly, check for leaks, repair leaking taps, and check washers for wear and tear.

You can check if your toilet is leaking by putting a little food colouring in the tank. If the food colouring appears in the bowl without flushing, have the cistern repaired immediately.

To find out if you have a leak in your pipes, turn off all taps and make sure that nobody will be using any water. Check your water meter and make a note of the reading. Recheck the meter after at least one hour. If the reading has changed, you may have a leak. This needs to be found and fixed.

More information

Visit the Department of Environment and Resource Management website <www.derm.qld.gov.au/waterwise> or contact your local council or distributor-retailer.