

Get a Handle on Home Water Use

When we scan our monthly water bill and see the number of gallons we have used in the past thirty days, do we consider where in our household the water use occurred? A little insight into typical home water use can shed light on how we use water and how we can take steps to use it more efficiently.

According to the *Handbook of Water Use and Conservation* by Amy Vickers, daily indoor per capita water use in the typical single family home is 69.3 gallons.

As we can see from the figures below, showers, washing clothes, flushing the toilet, leaks, and use from faucets account for over 94% of indoor use. By installing more efficient water fixtures and regularly checking for leaks, households can reduce daily per capita water use by about 35% to about 45.2 gallons per day.

The most obvious place to start to reduce water use is the toilet. Older style toilets use up to six gallons per flush. Newer toilets use under two gallons. This savings can add up to 1,000 gallons per month. A leaking toilet can also waste hundreds of gallons. Check for water running over the overflow tube inside the tank or a leaking flapper. Place some food coloring in the tank and if it shows up in the bowl, replace the flapper. Place some food coloring in the tank and if it shows up in the bowl, replace the flapper.

Older showers and faucets can be retrofitted with a water saving disk placed in the shower head or spout. Newer faucets are manufactured to a water-saving standard.

Washing clothes accounts for 22% of in-home use and can be one of the more expensive items to tame. Older models can use 40 gallons per load. Efficient clothes washers use only 18-25 gallons per load and can be much more expensive making the payback time longer.

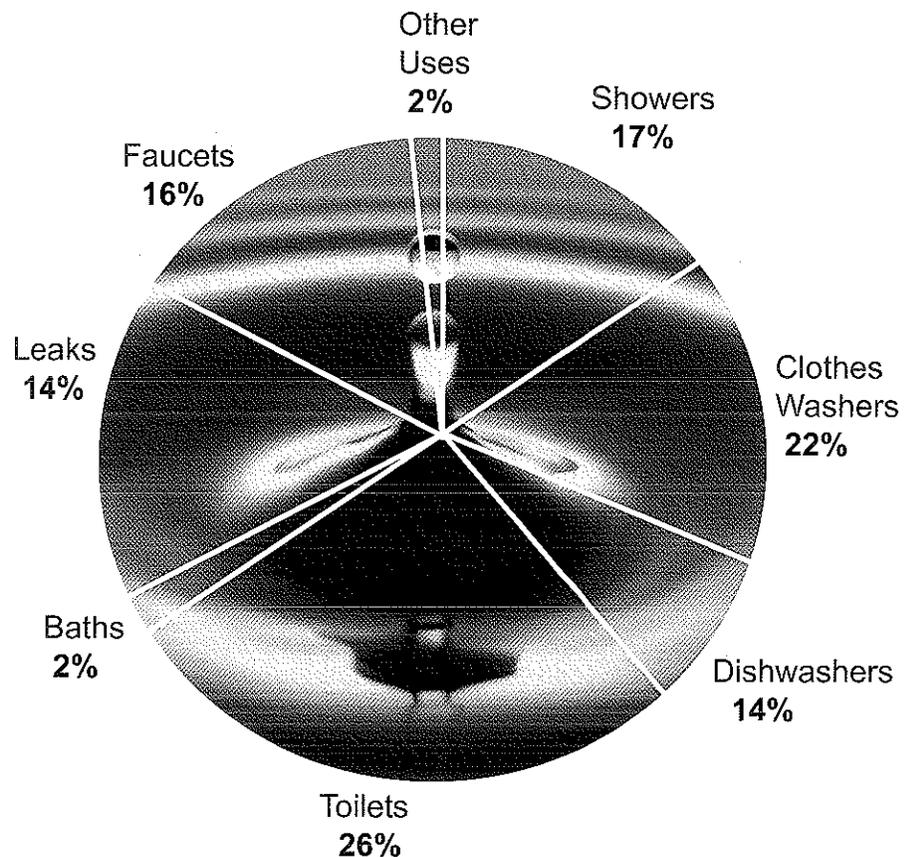
A dripping faucet can waste hundreds of gallons per month and is generally an easy fix.

You can also save water by taking some basic steps with everyday water use. When washing dishes by hand or when brushing your teeth, do not leave the water running. Fully load the dishwasher before running. Defrost frozen food in the refrigerator instead of running hot water over the food.

Controlling leaks and using water more efficiently can cut your water use by 35%. You save money on your bill and your water system saves investment in water treatment and delivery facilities.

Here is how it breaks down:

Use	Gallons Per Capita
Showers.....	11.6
Clothes Washers.....	15.0
Dishwashers.....	1.0
Toilets.....	18.5
Baths.....	1.2
Leaks.....	9.5
Faucets.....	10.9
Other Domestic Uses.....	1.6



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