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Tips for Conserving Water in the Home

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Rather than panicking about drought conditions, it is better to recognize the value of our water resource while we still have it available and conserve.

Inside our homes, **bathrooms account for 75 percent** of overall water use, **kitchens, 20 percent. Cooking, drinking and miscellaneous uses make up 5 percent.** Because of this, start in the bathroom when making your water-saving observations and changes.

Bathrooms

- Fix leaky faucets: A slow steady drip can waste more than 350 gallons a month. A faucet with a steady stream can waste 4,600 gallons a month.
- Check your toilet for leaks. Put a dye tablet or food coloring into the tank. If colored water appears in the bowl without flushing there is a leak that should be repaired. This could save about 200 gallons of water every day. A low-flow toilet uses from 1.3 to 1.6 gallons per flush. A urinal, such as the ones in public restrooms, uses from .5 to 1 gallon per flush.
- Install water-saving showerheads. Older showerheads use from 5 to 7 gallons per minute (gpm). A low-flow showerhead reduces the water usage to 2.5 gpm or less.

To determine if you need a low-flow showerhead, set a two-quart saucepan on the shower floor in the middle of the shower stream. With the shower on full, count how many seconds it takes to fill the pan. If it takes fewer than 12 seconds, you could use a low-flow showerhead.

If you have a low-flow showerhead installed, it should read “2.5 gpm” or less. Remember not to dispose of the clean water from the saucepan, but recycle it on plants, pet water dish, etc. Showerheads are available in most hardware, discount or home improvement stores.

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Also:

- Shorten your showers. Even a one-or-two-minute reduction could save 700 gallons a month.
- If your toilet is a 1992 or earlier model, it probably uses an inefficient 3.5 to 7 gallons per flush. New high-efficiency models use 1.3 gallons per flush or less.
- Don't use your toilet as a garbage can or ashtray. You could save 400-to-600 gallons a month.
- Capture tap water. While waiting for hot water at the faucet, catch the flow for other uses, such as watering house plants. You could save 200-to-300 gallons a month.
- Install low-flow faucet aerators to reduce water flow at the faucets from 3 to 7 gpm to 1.5 gpm. If an aerator is already installed, the rated flow imprinted on the side should read 1.5 gpm.
- Turn off the water while brushing your teeth. You could save up to 3,000 gallons a year.
- Turn off the water while shaving. You could save 3 gallons a day.

Kitchen

- If you wash dishes by hand, don't leave the water running for rinsing. You can save 200 to 500 gallons per month.
- Keep drinking water in the refrigerator to avoid having to run the faucet for cold water. You could save 200 to 300 gallons per month.
- Don't let faucets run while cleaning vegetables. Rinse them in the sink or a pan. You could save 150 to 250 gallons per month.

Other

- Choose high-efficiency appliances, such as Energy Star-rated clothes or dishwashers, when replacements are needed. Energy Star is a government-backed program helping protect the environment through superior energy efficiency.
- Water-saving dishwashers use about 4 gallons of water, which is about one-third of the water needed by an older dishwasher. The average washing machine uses about 41 gallons of water per load, while the newer high-efficiency washing machines use less than 28 gallons per load. To achieve even greater savings, wash only full loads of laundry or use the appropriate load size selection on the washing machine.
- Avoid garbage disposals for food scraps. They use about 11 gpm of water to operate.

Source: <http://www.monolake.org/socalwater/wctips.htm> The **Mono Lake Committee** is a non-profit citizens' group dedicated to protecting and restoring the Mono Basin ecosystem in California's Eastern Sierra Mountains.

For other hints from the folks who have been under drought conditions longer than we have, try: East Bay Municipal Utility District (Alameda and Contra Costa counties, Calif.)

http://www.ebmud.com/conserving_&_recycling/water_smart_tips/default.htm#House

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