



Fix a Leak Week Family Fact Sheet

**Milwaukee
Water Works**

Safe, Abundant Drinking Water.



Fix a Leak Week, sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's WaterSense® program, takes place in March. It's a time when families are encouraged to check for water leaks and drips in bathrooms, kitchens, and yards at home.

What Is WaterSense?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, or EPA for short, is the part of our nation's government that helps to protect the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the land where we live. EPA's WaterSense program encourages Americans to use only the water they need and avoid wasting this precious resource. This concept is known as "water efficiency."

The Facts on Leaks:

- Sewer charges are directly related to water use. Both City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District charges are based on the amount of water that passes through your water meter, whether you consumed the water or it leaked and was wasted.
- Water-wasting leaks include running toilets, dripping faucets, and other leaking pipes around your home. Most of these leaks are easy to fix with parts from your local hardware store, or call a professional plumber for help.
- Fixing these leaks can save your family more than 10 percent on water bills. That's like saving \$1 for every \$10 spent on water.

Finding Leaks:

- You are charged for all water that passes through the water meter and into your home, whether you enjoyed a cold drink or a hot shower or the water dripped, leaked and was wasted. Find the meter in the basement (or first floor if there is no basement), along the wall nearest the street.
- Turn off all faucets and showers and make sure no one flushes the toilet while you do this meter check. Open the cover on the meter and look at the small blue wheel on the meter face. If it is moving slowly or spinning fast, you probably have water leaks.
- Walk through your house listening for running toilets and looking for drips. Drips usually mean leaks.
- Find out if your toilet is leaking silently by placing a drop of food coloring in the toilet tank (that's the area behind the toilet seat—ask for mom or dad's help to remove the lid). If color shows up in the toilet bowl after 15 minutes without flushing, you have a leak.



Meter Dial Face

Faucets:

- Take a watch or clock with a second hand and time how often your faucet drips. A leaky faucet that drips at the rate of one drip per second can waste more than 3,000 gallons in a year!
- There are parts that hold your faucet together called washers and gaskets—they can wear down and cause drips. These parts are inexpensive and easy to replace. Find them at your local hardware store.
- There's also a little screen device called an "aerator" that can be screwed onto the tip of your faucet—it adds air into the water stream so you can use less water to wash your hands or brush your teeth without noticing a difference in water flow. Look for the WaterSense label when buying an aerator or replacing a faucet—that means the product will work well and save water.

Showers:

- Showerheads—the place where water comes out in streams at the top of your shower—can also get old and leak, even when the water is not on. A showerhead that drops just 10 drips in a minute wastes more than 500 gallons per year. That’s enough water, if you saved it all up, to wash 60 loads of dishes in your dishwasher.
- Most leaky showerheads can be fixed by making sure they’re screwed in tight. Wrap the showerhead connection in “pipe tape,” available at hardware stores, and use a wrench to tighten it.



Toilets:

- It’s one of the oldest prank phone calls—“Is your toilet running? Then you’d better catch it!” But a running toilet is no joke. If you can hear the water in your toilet making noise, even when no one flushed recently, you have a running toilet that could be wasting 200 gallons of water or more every day. Sometimes you just need to jiggle the handle to fix it, but sometimes a part needs to be replaced.
- Many toilets leaks are caused because the “flapper” is decayed or broken. The flapper is a rubber piece that opens up to let the water flow from the tank into the bowl when you pull down on the toilet handle. You can easily fix this leak with parts from your local hardware store. Ask at the store for help choosing the correct parts. If your toilet continues to leak, call a professional plumber.
- If you have to replace a leaky toilet, look for a new one with the WaterSense label to save both water and money on your water and sewer bills.



Outdoors:

- Check your garden hose for leaks where it connects to the side of the house. If it leaks when the hose is turned on, make sure the hose is screwed in tight. If that doesn’t work, replace the nylon or rubber hose washer or wrap the “spigot,” which is the metal faucet where the end of the host attaches to the wall, in pipe tape.
- If you have a sprinkler system that waters your lawn, check the system each spring before turning it on to make sure the sprinklers were not broken during the winter or have sprung any leaks.

For more information, visit
www.epa.gov/watersense/fixaleak
and
www.milwaukee.gov/water

Most leaks are easy to fix with parts from your local hardware store.
If you need help, contact a professional plumber.

Milwaukee Water Works Customer Service Center

Monday – Friday, 7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
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Para una explicación en español, por favor llame (414) 286-2830.

