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Household Water Use: Typical Uses and Conservation Practices

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Every day people use water not only for drinking and cooking, but for bathing, cleaning and many other purposes. However, the amount used by families in their home can vary because people have different water use habits and a variety of fixtures and appliances installed in their homes.

Water-using fixtures and appliances (e.g., faucets, toilets, showers, clothes washers, dishwashers) designed in the past two decades typically use less water than older devices, and water-using devices labeled as “ENERGY STAR” or “Water Sense” are the most water efficient. The ages, gender and number of occupants in the home also plays a role in how much water is used.

The US Environmental Protection Agency and the American Water Works Association collected water use data from over a thousand homes in different North American Cities. They found a wide range of water use depending on whether or not families addressed leaks, how efficient the fixtures and appliances were in the home, and whether or not families applied conservation practices.

Families that used the most water did not fix leaks; used older and less-efficient fixtures and appliances, and did not use water-saving practices. A family of four used about 499 gallons of water per day under these conditions. The largest amount of water use was from bathing, followed by the kitchen faucet and toilet. These were followed by the clothes washing machine, leaks, and other uses. The fixtures in this scenario were over 20 years old and had higher flow rates than newer more efficient fixtures. Leaks were most commonly due to the toilet, followed by faucets.



Alternatively, a family that fixed leaks and used the most efficient fixtures and appliances (meeting the Water Sense/ENERGY STAR standards) but maintained the same water use pattern (e.g., same frequency and length of appliance use) saw significant reductions. The total water consumption for a family of four under these conditions was 176 gallons of water per day, which is less than half the water use as the first example. Further reductions in water use can be realized as the water use patterns are changed.

What can you do to be more water-efficient in your home? First, identify and repair water leaks. Second, change water use practices. Consider taking shorter showers, flushing the toilet less often, doing fewer, and full loads of laundry or dishes. Third, add aerators to faucets to reduce water flow while maintaining wetting ability. Fourth, replace older fixtures and appliances (esp. toilets and washing machines) with more efficient, up-to-date versions. Saving water in your home is important.

Changing water use practices will cost nothing, and may even save money as less water might be heated and used. Other conservation methods like taking care of leaks or adding an aerator to your faucet are fairly inexpensive. Water is a finite resource, and it is important that we work to conserve it, so it will be available for future use.

Average Daily Water Use

Same frequency of water use per day for a 4 person household.

Old
499 gal/day - pre 1994
fixtures and appliances

Modern
175 gal/day - WaterSense / ENERGY
STAR fixtures and appliances

