

# Is Your Water Bill **HIGHER** Than It Should Be?



## Saving water makes cents!



If your water bill is higher than usual you might want to check for leaks in your household plumbing. Before checking for leaks, check your water account history. Did your consumption increase last year around the same time? Have you started watering your yard, washing your car, etc.? If so, does this account for the additional consumption?

If you rely on a higher than average water bill to alert you to a leak, you may miss an opportunity to reduce the bill before it gets too big since water meters are only read once every 2 months. A faucet leaking 60 drops a minute (not unusual) will waste 8,703 litres of water every year! And don't forget - **you pay twice**: once for the water going through the meter and then again on your wastewater bill, which is based on water usage.

The meter is a great tool for checking your home for leaks. Follow these steps to see if you have a leak.

### Step 1 Turn off the water

Turn off all water inside and outside the house including showers, sinks, the washing machine, and any other appliance that uses water.

### Step 2 Observe your meter



- If your meter has a red "leak indicator" dial and it is spinning, you may have a leak.
- Read the number of litres shown on the water meter and then wait at least 15 minutes without using water.

- Look at the meter again to see if the hand moved or the dial changed. If it did not, there are probably no leaks.
- Waiting longer between meter readings (overnight, for instance) might help you detect slow or intermittent leaks.
- If the meter hand moved or the dial changed, check all of your water connections for leaks.

Not all leaks are as obvious as a dripping faucet. If you hear water running in your home when no water is in use or if your water usage is suddenly higher than expected, you most likely have a water leak. The most common sources of leaks are toilets and dripping faucets.

### FAUCETS

The second most common cause of household leaks is worn washers in faucets. If any tap drips after it has been turned off firmly, usually the washer is worn and needs to be replaced. Other types of faucets require new o-rings, cartridges, or ceramic discs. When inspecting the home for faucet leaks, it is important to inspect other water valves around the home, including: showers, bathtubs, water heaters, hose bibs, laundry basins, etc. A leaky faucet can waste up to 75 litres of water a day and if it is leaking hot water, it's costing you money to heat the water too! Repairs to toilets and faucets can be fairly simple, while other leaks may need a professional plumber. Don't get in over your head. If you're not sure that you can fix it - call a professional.



# Not Obvious yet COMMON Sources of Leaks Within the Home...

## WHOLE HOUSE HUMIDIFIERS

Homes with forced-air central heating systems also commonly have whole house humidifiers. These humidifiers are usually attached to the furnace plenum and directly plumbed to the water supply pipes to provide constant water supply to the appliance's water reservoir. The equipment often includes an overflow drain to the sewer in case the refill valve fails to close. When the valve does fail, the water is sent directly into the sewer. This allows leaks to occur for months or years before anyone realizes the water waste. It is important to check the operation of this equipment regularly during the heating season, and turn off the water supply to the equipment during seasons of non-use.



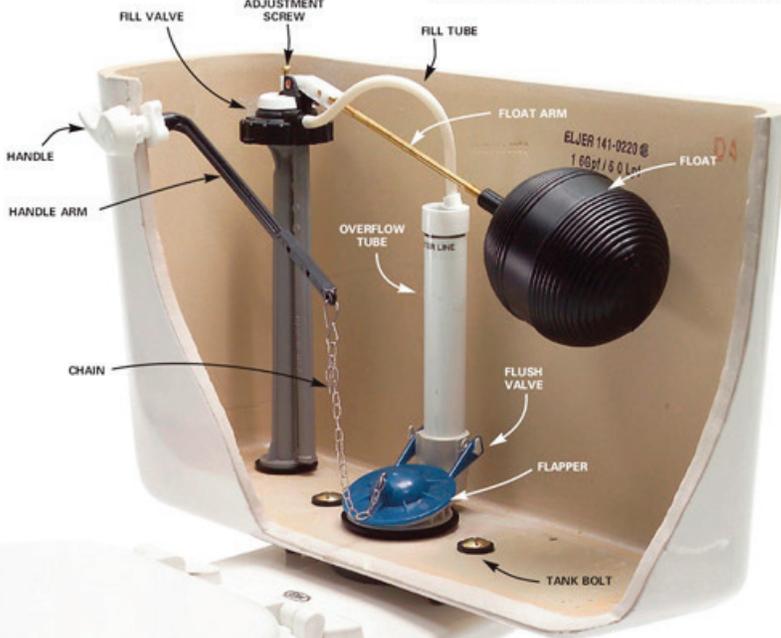
## MECHANICAL TRAP SEAL PRIMERS

In most homes built within the last 20 years, laundry sink faucets are usually connected to a mechanical trap seal primer which runs a tube down the inside of the faucet to the floor and acts to release some water to the floor drain every time the tap is turned on. This is done to prevent sewer gases from entering the home by adding water to the drain trap (otherwise it would dry up). This, in turn, creates a seal or barrier to the sewer gases. The problem is that these primers can and often do eventually wear out, unbeknownst to the homeowner. 99% of the time the washer on the hot water line is the first to wear out resulting in a costly, hidden hot water leak. How do you know if your mechanical trap seal primer is leaking? Here are some clues to check for when the laundry tap is **NOT** turned on:



- Dripping sound near the floor drain
- The laundry room floor is inexplicably warm
- Higher than expected water bill (if all other leaks are ruled out)
- If the tube entering the drain is clear, you may see water flowing through it

Standard Toilet Diagram - ToiletSeatStyle.com



## TOILETS

The most common source of a leak is your toilet. As it is the biggest user of water in the house, leaks here will be expensive and can be hard to detect. Sometimes it's easy to tell if a toilet is leaking – you hear water running. But leaks can be silent too.

There are several causes for these leaks, but flapper valves are the most common problem. Leaks occur when the flapper valve does not create a water tight seal. The seal can be compromised due to several reasons:

- chain snagging, not allowing the flapper to drop completely onto the valve seat
- valve seat is worn or corroded
- flapper is worn or warped

### To check for toilet leaks:

1. Remove the toilet tank lid.
2. Place 10 drops of food coloring into the toilet tank. Do not flush.
3. If color appears in the bowl within 15 minutes, this means water is leaking from the tank.
4. Repair (or replace) your toilet.

A worn flapper can be easily replaced. Leaks in toilets can also be caused by worn fill valves and if it is at the overflow pipe, the water level is usually too high. To correct this problem, gently bend the float arm (if it's metal) down so the valve shuts off water about a half-inch below the top of the overflow pipe. The tank water level should be at the level line on inside of tank. Consult a plumber if you are not an experienced do-it-yourselfer.