

Regardless of size, a water leak is no small matter.

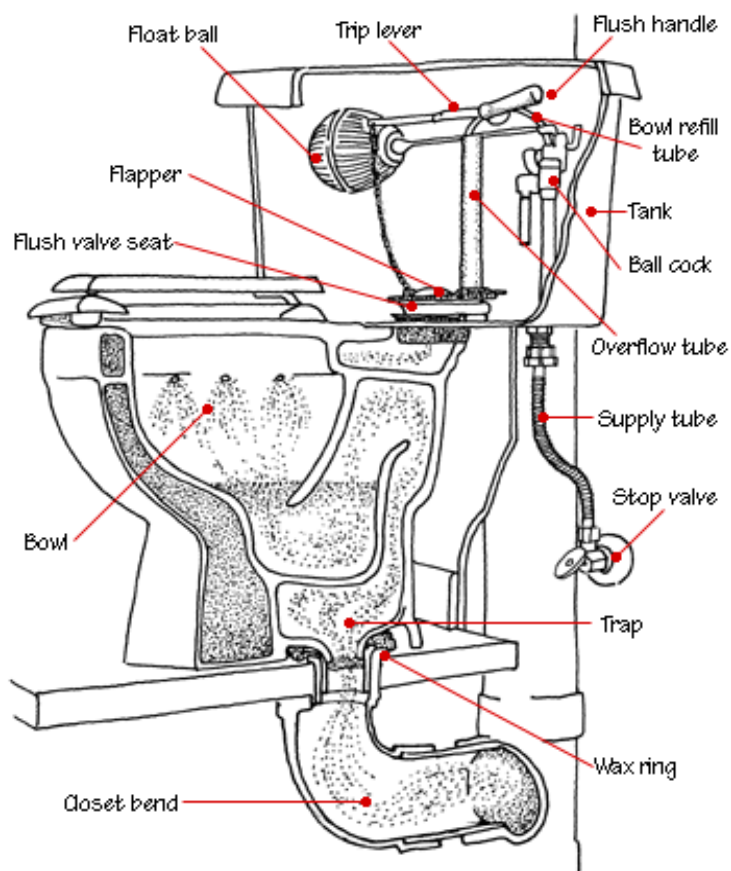
Who hasn't had a leak at one time or another?

Leaks in the bathroom and kitchen are common. What shouldn't be common is allowing leaks to go undetected or unrepaired. A small leak, about the size of the head of a pin, dripping at one drop per second can add up to 7 gallons a day. A big leak, the kind most often associated with a toilet malfunction, can waste 200 gallons or more per day. Knowing where to look for leaks can help cut water waste. Why wait to be surprised by abnormally high water use when checking for leaks is so easy? Here's where some of the more common leaks are found:

Toilets

The trouble with leaking toilets is you don't always hear them leaking. Slow, silent toilet leaks are quite common. Checking regularly for toilet leaks is not a part of most people's normal routine, but it should be. We recommend checking quarterly for toilet leaks. The fastest way to check for a toilet leak is to put a couple of drops of dark food coloring in the toilet tank. Remember, don't flush the toilet during this test.

breakout of toilet parts



Wait at least 15 minutes, then check the water in the toilet bowl. If color has traveled into the bowl, the toilet tank is leaking. The most common causes of a leaking toilet are:

1) water running into the overflow tube or 2) a warped or cracked flapper.

If water running into the overflow tube is the source of the problem, carefully adjust the float level control screw so that the water shuts off at a half inch to one inch below the overflow pipe.

If the flapper is warped or cracked, make sure to replace it with one that matches the brand and model of the toilet so the seal is tight. Costs for flappers generally run in the \$5 to \$10 range. Replacement is easy: just follow the installation instructions on the package.

A word of caution – generic flappers may not seal properly and could cause additional water waste. Find information on checking and replacing flappers, including the recommended replacement flapper for your toilet at www.toiletflapper.org

Faucets

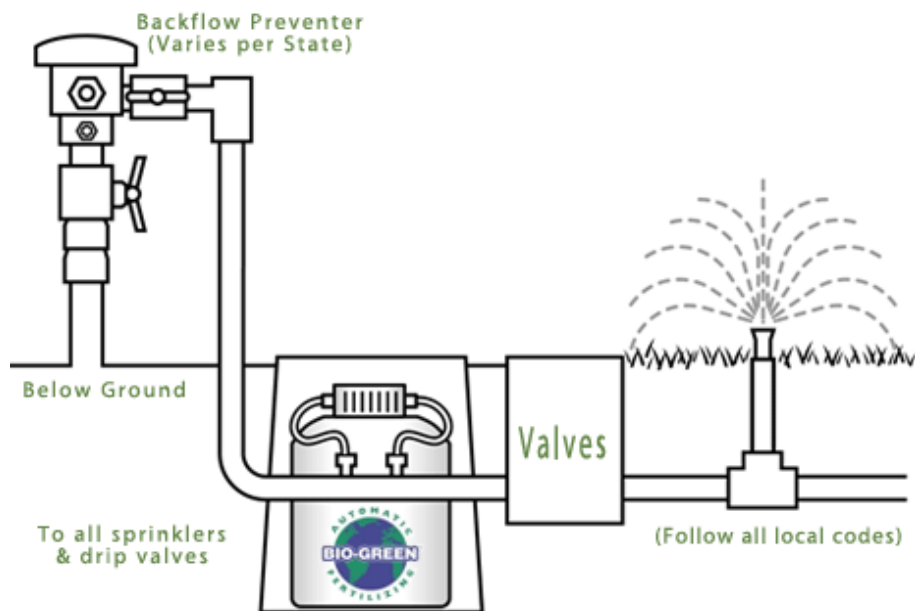
Leaking faucets can be big water wasters. Check faucets in the bathroom and kitchen periodically for leaks. A faucet dripping at just one small drop per second can waste 7 gallons per day or more than 2,500 gallons per year! Leaking faucets are easily repaired by replacing worn washers. Do-it-yourself books with easy-to-follow instructions are available at libraries, bookstores and home improvement stores.

You can also save water by retrofitting older plumbing fixtures with newer low flow fixtures.



Sprinkler Systems

Broken sprinkler heads or damaged underground water pipes are common sources of leaks in sprinkler systems. Lawn mowers and car tires can break sprinkler heads, so it's important to watch your system run at least once per month to spot any problems early.



Look for wet depressions in grass and plant areas that may indicate broken pipes.

Broken heads only leak when the system is operating. Usually a broken head does not add very many gallons to the water usage, unless the sprinkler system is on. A broken pipe on the other hand, can leak when the system is on or off and will add many more gallons to the usage.

Periodically give your irrigation system a checkup to ensure proper operation and water efficiency. Check the current water use restrictions for information on running your irrigation system for maintenance purposes outside permitted days and hours.

Chart of Water Costs for Various Leaks

Leak Type	Leak Rate Gallons per Minute	Leak Rate Gallons per month	Cost per month
Slow drip	0.1	5,000	\$6.00
Leaky flapper	0.25	11,000	\$15.00
Stuck faucet	1.5	65,000	\$97.50
Running toilet	2.5	108,000	\$162.00
Leaking water pipe	3	130,000	\$195.00

(Volume in gallons calculated from California Urban Water Conservation Council information at www.h2ouse.org.; please note that monthly leak-rate amounts have been rounded)

As you can see, small leaks can quickly add up to big waste and expense. If it is a hot water leak you have to add on the cost of the wasted electricity needed to heat the water.

A constantly running toilet could result in more than \$300 in combined water and sewer usage charges in just one month. You may be able to prevent this type of waste with just \$15 in supplies from a home improvement store and an hour of repair time.

Let Your Water Meter Help

If you suspect you have a leak somewhere but the most likely sources have checked out okay, enlist the help of your water meter.

First, make certain no water is being used inside or outside.

Locate your meter box, carefully remove the cover and lift the top of the meter. Observe the numbers on the meter to see if they change. If so, you have a leak.

If you suspect that the leak is near your water meter, please contact the Utility Billing department to request a meter reader to investigate. A water usage or sewer reading report can help you to determine what type of leak you have and how long it has been leaking.