



Septic Safe

Fact Sheet 5



Water conservation and your OSMS

The quantity and composition of waste generated in the home varies according to the number of residents, their personal water usage, and the water-utilizing appliances in the home.

All household waste is disposed of through the septic system – it is broken down in the septic tank and the treated effluent flows into the soil via absorption and/or evapotranspiration. Septic seepage poses human health risks by releasing harmful pathogens into the water table and nearby watercourses.

Tips on Saving Water

Laundry

The laundry is a place where you not only use a lot of water but you also use energy and detergents. The best way to save water in the laundry is to make sure that you select the right washing machine, one that has a water rating of 4 stars or more. This will usually mean a front-loading washing machine. On average, front-loading washing machines use up to 50 per cent less water, 35 per cent less detergent and 30 per cent less energy than top loaders.

Here are some other changes you can make to your laundry habits

- only use the washing machine when you have a full load; you can sort and wash bigger loads more efficiently over the week
- pre-treat stains before you wash to reduce the chances of having to rewash
- make sure that everyone picks up and sorts the clothes they wear each day. That way, clean clothes won't get washed just because they are left lying on the floor
- if you are washing clothes by hand, use only as much water as you need in the sink or bucket. Reuse this water in your garden.

Kitchen

A 5-star water-efficient dishwasher uses as little as 7 litres of water - so a water-efficient dishwasher will use less water than washing dishes by hand.



Make sure you

- only use the dishwasher when you have a full load
- scrape plates instead of pre-rinsing under the tap
- non-water efficient dishwashers can use up to 25 litres of water a cycle. If you have this type of dishwasher, you will save more water if you wash your dishes by hand. If you hand-wash your dishes, don't rinse them under running water. A running kitchen tap can use up to 15 litres of water a minute
- if you have two sinks, half-fill the second with rinsing water. If you only have one sink, rinse the washed dishes in a pan of hot water
- don't use running water to wash your vegetables or to defrost food. Instead, wash vegetables in a bowl and place your frozen food in the fridge to thaw overnight
- scrape your dishes and soak pots and pans to remove food rather than rinsing them under running water.



Bathroom

Toilet

Up to 16 per cent of household water is flushed down the toilet:

- don't flush needlessly, and only flush toilet paper down the toilet
- use the half-flush option on dual-flush toilets
- replace your older-style toilet with a 4-star dual-flush system. This can save you up to 8 litres of water with every flush
- if this is not practical, try reducing the volume of water you use with each flush. You can do this by installing a flow restrictor or by putting a bottle filled with water in the cistern.

Showers, baths and basins

- A standard shower can use 20 litres of water per minute. To use less water in the shower, try the following:
- install a water-efficient shower head. A 3-star rated shower head will use no more than 9 litres of water per minute
- take a shorter shower. Shorter showers will not only save water but will help to save on the energy associated with heating the water
- insulate your hot water pipes. This means you will not need to wait as long for the hot water to flow through -saving you both water and energy
- make sure your hot water system thermostat is not set too high. Adding cold water to reduce the temperature of very hot water wastes both water and energy
- use a bucket to catch water while the shower warms up. You can then reuse this water on your garden.

For baths and basins

- use a plug when washing your hands and face
- turn off the tap while cleaning your teeth or shaving
- use as little water as possible in the bath. Put the plug in before you turn on the tap and fill the bath to less than a third. You may also like to bath small children together.

Check for leaks

- a lot of water around the home can be lost because of leaking pipes and dripping taps. Just one slowly dripping tap can waste 9,000 litres of water a year, while a visibly leaking toilet can waste more than 60,000 litres. Make sure that you turn all your taps off properly, check for leaks, repair leaking taps, and check washers for wear and tear
- you can check if your toilet is leaking by putting a little food colouring in the tank. If the food colouring appears in the bowl without flushing, have the cistern repaired immediately
- to find out if you have a leak in your pipes and you are on mains water, turn off all taps and make sure that nobody will be using any water. Check your water meter and make a note of the reading. Recheck the meter after at least one hour. If the reading has changed, you may have a leak. This needs to be found and fixed



By saving water you will also save

- energy — It takes energy to treat, transfer and heat water. The less water you use, the less energy you use and the less greenhouse gases you create
- the environment — the less wastewater you generate, the less contaminants and detergents you release into our rivers and oceans.

Further Information

Environment and Health Unit

#E2017/5386 Jan 2017