conserving water in your home

Conserving water in the rural home will:

- **improve septic system function**
- **conserve energy use** (pumping, softening, treating, heating water)
- **protect water resources for the future.**

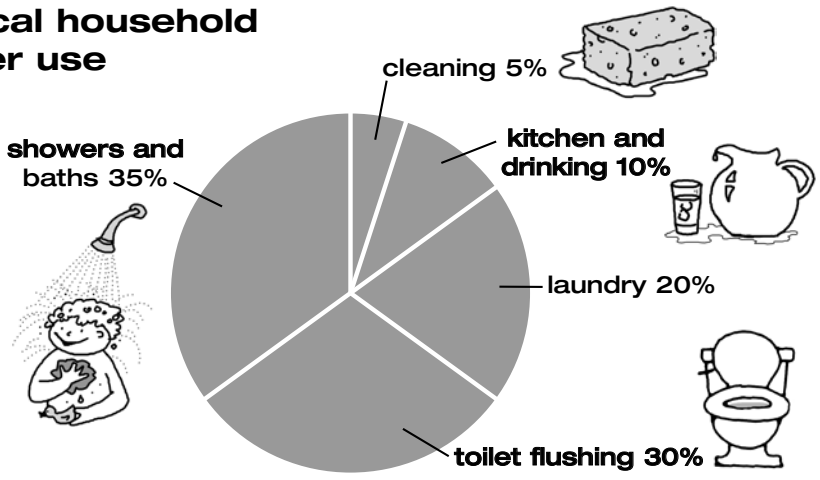
Protect your septic system from too much water

Too much water flowing into the septic system doesn't allow solids to settle in the tank. Excess water flowing into the leaching bed doesn't allow it to rest and absorb oxygen, which is necessary in the break down of bacteria and pathogens. As a consequence, pollutants can be carried into ground and surface waters. One study found that too much water flow saturating the leaching bed caused 75 per cent of bed failures.

Avoid excess water in your tank and leaching bed

- Spread out showering, bathing and clothes washing.
- Reduce water use for a few days before a large number of guests are expected. If you are planning a party, consider renting a portable toilet as your septic was not designed to manage the water flow of that many people.
- Direct downspouts and the effluent from air conditioners and dehumidifiers away from the septic tank and bed.
- Grade land so rain water flows away from the bed.
- Direct water softener brine into a Class 2 leaching pit or the sump hole in your basement.

Typical household water use



Source: Environment Canada

"Because our water use almost always leads to some degree of deterioration in water quality, the less water we withdraw, the less we upset the natural balance of our ecosystem, the less we have to spend to restore the water quality to an acceptable standard for public use."

Environment Canada: ***Water Conservation – Every Drop Counts***

Did you know?

Canadians are some of the world's most wasteful water users. Each of us uses an average 326 litres of water a day. This is more than twice what Europeans use.

WellAware.ca

(over)

here's how to **cut back** on your **water use**

Toilet

The toilet is the single biggest user of water. Each of us flushes about five times a day.

Replace a toilet that is older than 10 years with a new ultra-low-flush toilet and reduce water use by 15 - 20 per cent.

Retrofit an older toilet to use less water with a specially designed flapper valve that closes more quickly, a dual-flush device, a toilet dam or a tank insert that displaces water. (Don't use a bare brick or rock as dissolved particles can clog pipes and septics.)

Follow an old ditty: "When it's yellow, let it mellow; when it's brown, flush it down."

Repair toilet leaks promptly. Check for a leak by putting a few drops of food colouring in the tank. Without flushing, see if the food colouring moves from the tank into the bowl. If it does, you have a leak. Check for leaks around the base of the toilet and repair promptly.

Ensure that the float ball is properly adjusted so the tank water level does not exceed the height of the overflow tube. Periodically examine whether the plunge ball and flapper valve in the tank are properly "seated" and replace parts when necessary.

Consider replacing a water toilet with a composting toilet and reduce total water use by 30 per cent.

Shower

Install low-flow shower heads or adjustable flow-reducer devices, preferably with shut-off buttons, and save 25 per cent of shower water and about $100 a year in heating costs.

Short showers use less water than baths.

Turn taps off snugly so they don't drip.

Promptly repair leaks.

Sinks

Install an aerator and or a water flow-reducer attachment on your faucets.

Turn taps off snugly so they don't drip.

Promptly repair leaks in and around your taps. (One leak can waste several thousand litres of water each year, enough to fill a swimming pool or stress out your leaching bed.)

Use a partly filled sink rather than running water for shaving or washing hands.

Turn off water between wetting your toothbrush and rinsing.

Kitchen sinks

Put pipe wrap on basement hot water pipes so heated water arrives at your tap more quickly.

When hand-washing dishes, don't run water continuously.

Wash dishes in a partly filled sink and rinse in a second partly filled sink or with the spray attachment.

Wash fruits and vegetables in a partly filled sink, not under running water, and rinse quickly under the tap.

In summer, wash dishes, fruits and vegetables in a basin and put this greywater on trees and bushes.

In winter, try using used dishwater on house plants. Don't store used water.

Dishwasher

Wash only full loads in the dishwasher, use the short or water/energy conserver cycle and let dishes dry on their own. (Following these practices can mean using less water than hand washing.)

Stove

Steam vegetables in a little water or boil in just enough water to cover them, using a tight fitting lid.

Refrigerator

Keep a pitcher of chilled water in the fridge to avoid waiting for cold water to arrive at your tap.

Laundry

Wash only full loads in the washing machine.

Use suds-saver, short cycle and load size features.

Promptly repair any leaks.

Select a front-loading washer the next time you replace your machine. They generally use much less water than top-loading machines.

Spread your laundry out over the week. Consider doing one load a day or two, instead of several loads on the same day.

With information from and acknowledgement to:

Environment Canada: A Primer on Fresh Water; Water Conservation – Every Drop Counts; Water, No Time to Waste: A Consumer's Guide to Water Conservation

Ontario New Home Warranty Program: A New Homeowner's Guide to Septic Systems

Ottawa-Carleton: How Well is Your Well? Homeowner's Guide to Safe Wells and Septic Systems

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