

Using less water

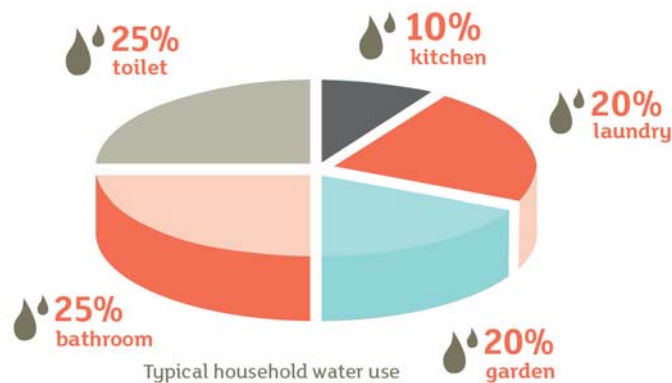
In this fact sheet:

- Water-efficient appliances
- Low flow taps and showerheads
- In-sink waste disposal
- Tips to save water

In New Zealand, we're surrounded by water. It's easy to think of it as a free resource - one that will never run out. But that isn't entirely the case. Increasingly, towns and cities are facing water shortages. Some will have to invest in costly new infrastructure in coming years to ensure that supply can keep up with demand.

Already, many New Zealanders pay directly for the water they use. That trend is set to continue. The good news is that reducing your demand for water can be simple. Something as basic as fixing a leaky tap can make a difference. The costs of reducing water use can be minimal, yet the benefits are significant.

Here's where most household water is used:



Water-efficient appliances

When buying appliances, tap and shower ware, and toilets, check their star rating under the Water Efficiency Labelling Scheme – the more stars the more water efficient the appliance is. Currently WELS ratings are under the Australian system and can be accessed at www.environment.gov.au/wels_public/searchPublic.do. However, New Zealand is joining the scheme and, from 1 April 2011, all imported and manufactured appliances and fittings will need to be rated.



Low flow taps and showerheads

You can save a lot of water by simply changing your showerheads and taps to more water-efficient, low flow models.

A tap aerator will deliver 6 litres per minute, compared to 12-20 litres per minute delivered by many taps.

A standard showerhead uses about 15 to 25 litres of water per minute.

A 3 star rated water-efficient showerhead uses as little as 9 litres per minute – without compromising quality of the shower – saving about 14,500 litres per household each year.

In-sink waste disposal

While it's tempting to use in-sink waste disposal units, it's best to try not to. They waste a lot of water and can overload sewerage systems. A better option is to compost your food waste.

Tips to save water

Your actions can also reduce your water usage. In areas where water is metered, this will directly reduce your water bills. However, because electricity is used to heat your water, many of these steps will also reduce your electricity bills.

- Check for leaks inside and outside home. Use your water meter to check for leaks:
 - Turn off all your taps and water-using appliances and make sure that the toilet cistern has stopped filling. Now read your water meter - it is generally close to the street. Read it again after an hour - without using any water in the meantime. If the reading has changed you are losing water somewhere.
- Fix all dripping taps.

- Use the plug rather than running water, when you're washing, doing dishes or cleaning vegetables.
- Use modern dual flush toilets to reduce the amount of water used in each flush.
- Only wash full loads in dishwashers and washing machines.
- Washing your car with a bucket of warm water and only use the hose for rinsing.
- If you need to water the garden, choose water-efficient irrigation.
- Choose native and drought-resistant plants for your garden.

If there is a water meter in your home, you can use it to gauge your daily water use and make changes accordingly.

For more information:

- See Fact sheets on
 - Rainwater systems
 - Reducing stormwater runoff
- For more information on using less water in your garden, visit www.waitakere.govt.nz/AbtCit/ec/bldsus/pdf/water/gardeningwithwtr.pdf