

Living Water Smart

# Home Water Assessment

**British Columbians use about 490 litres of water a day.**

We drink only 3 percent of the water we use, with the rest going down the drain, down the toilet, or used to wash our cars and water our gardens.

By adopting water-efficient activities and technologies, we can reduce water use, energy bills, and help the environment!



## Let's Begin...

### Water Source

We only use municipal water – we don't have a rain barrel and don't re-use grey water.



We use municipal water, but we also have a rain barrel. We don't re-use our grey water.



We use municipal water, but we also have a rain barrel and we re-use our grey water.



By using a rain barrel, and by re-using grey water where appropriate, you will reduce the amount of municipal water your family uses. At a community level, these activities also help to reduce the cost of water treatment and supply services.



For more information on ways you can save water and your money visit

[www.livingwatersmart.ca](http://www.livingwatersmart.ca)



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Our washing machine is a standard top loader.



Switch to a water-conserving front loading machine as they use about one-third less water than top loading machines, and are more energy efficient as well.

.....  
We use a new front loading machine.



Use a full load each time you wash and use cold water. If you can, adjust the load setting on your machine if it isn't full. You will save water by doing fewer loads of laundry, and your machine will be most efficient.

We use the washing machine when we only have a partial load of laundry.



.....  
We only wash full loads of laundry in our washing machine.



We use regular laundry soap.



Phosphates and nitrogen can alter the health of streams, lakes, and other water bodies. Switch to detergents that are phosphate and nitrogen-free, and vegetable-based when possible.

.....  
We always use phosphate- and nitrogen-free dish soap.



## Kitchen

We use a regular dishwasher, and sometimes run it when it is only partially full.



Always make sure your dishwasher is full, and use the economy cycle. If you can, wash full sinks of dishes by hand, or switch to a water-conserving, energy-efficient dishwasher to save up to half of the water you would normally use.

.....  
We use a regular dishwasher, but only run it when it is full. Or we wash by hand once a day, and with a full sink of dishes.



.....  
We use a new water-conserving, energy-efficient dishwasher, and we only run it when it is full.



## Taps and Pipes

When running, our tap uses 15 litres of water per minute or more.



Install low flow taps, or aerators / washers to reduce your taps' flow rate. This not only saves water, but also conserves energy by using less hot water. ■

.....  
Our tap uses between 9 litres and 15 litres of water per minute.



.....  
Our tap uses 9 litres of water per minute or less.



Install low flow taps, or aerators / washers to reduce your taps' flow rate. This will not only save water, but also conserve energy by using less hot water. ■ ■

.....  
There are leaky taps and pipes in our home.



.....  
We don't know if there are any leaky taps or pipes in our home.



Replace the washers and valve seals on leaky taps as soon as possible – drips add up to hundreds of litres of wasted water each year.

.....  
We do not have any leaky taps or pipes in our home.



- Place a large bucket under your tap and run for 10 seconds on full. Measure how much water is in the bucket and multiply by 6 to find out your litres per minute flow rate.
- ■ Inside, look for water marks on floors, walls, and ceilings to see if indoor pipes are leaking. Outside, look for standing water on the ground when there has been no rain – it may be a broken underground pipe.

## A WATER WISE FACT

The average adult drinks only about 1.5 litres of water per day, and that includes water used in drinks such as coffee, tea and juice.





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## Garden and Outdoors

We wash our car / truck often, on a paved surface with a hose and no trigger sprayer.



We wash our car / truck often, but on the lawn with a bucket and a hose with a trigger sprayer.



We rarely wash our car / truck, on the lawn with a bucket and a hose with a trigger sprayer, or at a car wash.



Our car / truck leaks oil and radiator fluid.



Every once in a while our car / truck leaks oil and / or radiator fluid.



Our car / truck has no leaks, as it is well maintained.



We use an inefficient method to water our outdoor green space (e.g. poorly controlled automatic sprinklers).



We use a more efficient method to water our outdoor green space (e.g. semi-automatic sprinklers or hose with trigger sprayer).



We water our outdoor green space very efficiently (e.g. using a watering can or carefully controlled automatic sprinklers).



We always water our plants and outdoor green space during midday.



We sometimes water our plants and outdoor green space during midday, but also in the early morning or early evening.



We only water our plants and outdoor green space in the early morning or early evening.



We fertilize outdoors often, using lots of fertilizer. We also use pesticides and herbicides frequently, in any weather.



We only use as much fertilizer as our plants need, and use pesticides and herbicides only once in a while.



We have hardy plants that don't need to be fertilized, and use non-chemical control methods.



When renovating or doing other home projects, we always wash our brushes, tools, and containers outside near the street, gutter, or storm drain, and we never cover loose materials.



We keep liquid paint products and solvents away from storm drains, always use appropriate clean-up procedures, and cover loose materials.



When renovating or doing other home projects, we always clean our brushes, tools and containers in the sink and cover loose materials.



Buckets and trigger sprayers help reduce the amount of water used. Lawns will absorb water back into the soil, reducing water lost to the storm sewer. Commercial car washes typically recycle the water they use.

Leaked oil and other fluids get washed by the rain into our water systems. By keeping your car / truck leak-free, you help keep our water clean.

By providing only as much water as your garden needs, you avoid wasting water. Put an empty tuna can on your lawn to catch and measure the output of your sprinklers – only water “one tuna can” per week. Consider planting hardy plants and native species that are drought tolerant as well.

When you water during the early morning or early evening, you reduce the amount of water lost by evaporation, so you don't have to water as often, and you save water.

Fertilizers and chemicals enter the water system and can pollute streams, lakes, groundwater and other water sources. Use hardy plants that don't require fertilizing in your soil, especially native species. Never use chemicals in the rain or wind.

For water-based materials clean paint brushes, tools and containers in the sink, so that the water may be treated. Dispose of oil paints, thinners, thinner residue, and paint strippers at a hazardous waste disposal facility. Covering loose materials prevents them from being blown or washed into the storm drain and ending up in streams and other water bodies, where they can be harmful to fish.



## A WATER WISE FACT

Dripping taps are a major cause of wasted water and can also cause water damage in the home. Fixing a dripping tap can save up to 300 litres of quality B.C. drinking water per week.



# Living Water Smart

## Home Water Assessment

### Bathroom

I take long showers (8 minutes or more) with a regular shower head, and / or I take frequent baths.



I take shorter showers (3 to 8 minutes), but I use a regular shower head. I only have baths once in a while.



I take shorter showers using a low-flow shower head. I don't take baths much at all.



I leave the tap on while brushing my teeth, or washing my hands or other things, like my razor.



Sometimes I remember to turn the tap off while brushing my teeth or washing up.



I always turn the tap off while I brush my teeth, and I fill my sink basin with water for any washing up activities.



We have old toilets with large tanks that are single flush.



We have new, low-flow flush toilets with smaller tanks.



We have new 6 / 3 litre dual flush toilets, or use a water saving device.



Our toilet leaks.



Our toilet does not leak.



By using a low-flow shower head, you can use less than half the water you would normally use and have a great shower. You'll also conserve energy as you won't be using as much hot water. A bath can use 100 litres of water at a time. Short showers may only use 30 litres of water. ■

Turning your tap off while you are brushing your teeth can save 16 litres of water a minute. When rinsing your razor, fill the sink basin with water instead of leaving the tap on.

By installing a dual flush or low-flow system, your toilet will save thousands of litres of water a year. In the meantime, put a pop-bottle weighted with sand or pebbles into the toilet tank – it will decrease the amount of water your toilet uses to flush.

Replace your toilet's float or flapper to prevent leaking. Leaky toilets can waste thousands of litres of water a month. ■ ■

■ To measure the flow-rate of your shower, hold the bucket directly underneath the shower head and turn the tap on full blast for 10 seconds. Measure how much water is in the bucket, and multiply by 6. If your shower uses more than 8 or 9 litres of water per minute, you should change your shower head.

■ Put a few drops of food colouring into the tank, and don't flush for 30 minutes. If colour appears in the bowl, you have a leak. To find out where the leak is, turn off the water supply to your toilet, and draw a line in the tank at the water level. Wait 30 minutes. If the water level stays the same, the leak is caused by the toilet valve or float. If the water level drops, the problem is with the flapper at the base of the tank.

## Your Home Water Assessment Summary

To see how water smart your family is today, count up the number of times you have checked off the one, two, or three drop categories then read about your performance in the box below:



**Don't despair!** The fact that you've completed this assessment is the first step in your journey to becoming water smart. Many of the changes are easy to do and either free or very inexpensive. You can start today – just make a list of some of the changes you can do, and when you complete them, redo the assessment.



**You're well on your way!** There are still some things you can do to improve how you use and respect both water and energy. Make a list of changes you can do, and when you complete them, redo the assessment.



**Well done!** You are very water smart indeed. You're protecting and conserving both water and energy, and keeping our environment healthy. Keep up the excellent work, and help others learn how they can be water smart.