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Quality Water for Idaho

Household Water — Dos and Don'ts

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Surrounded by seemingly unlimited freshwater resources, Idahoans use more water in their businesses and homes than the residents of any other state. Idaho ranks second only to California in total water use, and first in total use per capita.

Although Idaho has an excellent water supply, it is limited. We must learn to use it more wisely if we are to continue to enjoy its benefits. Water conservation begins at home. You can do your part by following these dos and don'ts.

FACT: You can conserve water and use it wisely.

About 75 percent of all indoor water use occurs in the bathroom. Kitchen and laundry use account for the remaining 18 and 7 percent, respectively (Fig.1).

In the Kitchen

- Use an aerator or flow-reducing attachment on your faucets.
- Turn off your faucets tightly so they don't drip. If a faucet drips, promptly repair it.
- If you hand wash dishes, never leave the water running. Fill the sink, wash the dishes then quickly rinse them.

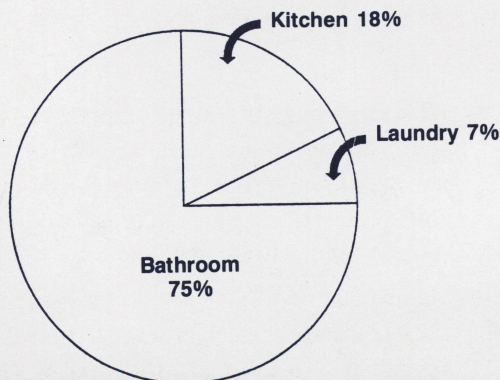


Fig. 1. Distribution of indoor water use in a typical home.

- If you use an automatic dishwasher, run it only when it's full and use the shortest cycle possible.
- Keep cold drinking water in your refrigerator instead of turning on the tap until the water runs cold.

In the Bathroom

- Turn off all taps tightly.
- When brushing your teeth, run the water only for rinsing your mouth and your brush. This saves 80 percent of the water usually used.
- When washing or shaving, use the water in a partially filled sink basin instead of continuously running the tap. This saves 60 percent of the water usually used.
- Promptly repair leaks in your faucets, shower or toilet.
- Use an aerator or flow-reducing attachment on your faucets.
- Use a low-flow shower head. Select one that reduces flow by at least 25 percent.
- Take short showers and turn off the water while lathering or shampooing. Some shower heads have a shut-off lever that allows you to maintain the water pressure and temperature when you stop the flow.

- If you take baths, avoid overfilling the tub (short showers use less water than baths).
- Install a low-flow toilet. This will reduce total indoor water use by at least 25 percent. Older toilets use 5 to 7 gallons per flush. Modern, low-flow toilets use as little as 1.5 gallons. Toilets are the greatest water users in bathrooms.
- If you can't afford a new toilet, reduce the flow in your old toilet by placing a brick or a plastic bottle filled with rocks in its water tank (be sure it does not interfere with the toilet mechanisms).
- Flush your toilet only when you need to. Don't use your toilet as a garbage can for tissue, cigarettes, feminine products, dental floss, diapers, hair, etc.
- Check your toilet tank for leaks by adding food coloring to the tank and seeing if it moves into the bowl without flushing. Make necessary repairs when coloring indicates leakage.
- Don't water your lawn if it's green. Look for a black tinge along the top to indicate the grass needs watering. A black tinge will not harm your lawn but browning will.
- Never turn on your sprinklers and leave home for the day.
- Water only your lawn, not sidewalks, street gutters, etc.
- Water during the cool parts of the day, morning or evening, when water loss to evaporation is lowest. Avoid watering on windy days, when evaporation is high.
- Keep your lawn healthy by cutting it at a height of about 2½ inches. Grass at this height holds water better than shorter grass and requires less watering. A healthy lawn will also choke out weeds.

In the Laundry Room

- Wash clothes only when you have a full load.
- Run your washing machine on the shortest cycle. If your machine has an adjustable water level setting, set it only as high as you need.

In the Yard and Garden

- Water lawns deeply (to a depth of 12 to 15 inches) every 3 to 5 days rather than for short periods daily.

On Your Property

- Wash your vehicles only when necessary. Use a bucket of soapy water and rinse briefly.
- Sweep your sidewalk and driveway rather than hose them off.
- Locate your water meter. Read it before bed and before using any water in the morning. If it shows a change, you have a leak. Track it down and promptly fix it.

FACT: You can preserve the quality of your water.

House and garden chemicals have simplified domestic chores, but they can be dangerous. Be responsible with these products so they don't affect the environment or turn up in our water or foods.

Hazardous Products

- Buy only those hazardous products you really need and only in quantities you will use. Hazardous products used around the home include some oven cleaners, toilet bowl cleaners, drain cleaners, bleaches, rust removers, paints, solvents, polishes, carpet and furniture cleaners and glues.
- If you don't completely use them up, give them to someone who needs them or take them to a hazardous waste or recycling center that will accept them. If your community doesn't have such centers, promote the idea.
- Never dispose of household hazardous products in the regular trash or by putting them down the drain. Most sewage treatment plants cannot remove house-

hold cleaners, paints, solvents and pesticides before returning the water to the environment.

- If you have a septic tank, flushing harsh chemicals can damage its effectiveness by killing the soil microorganisms that process sewage. Harsh chemicals escape processing by the microorganisms and thus may contaminate the septic tank drain field.

Alternatives

- Whenever possible, use cleaning products that will not harm the environment. Look for "environmentally friendly" products at the market. Many household products such as shampoo and baby ointment contain zinc. Paints and solvents may contain lead.
- Make your own household cleaning solutions from nonhazardous materials such as vinegar, pure soap, baking soda (sodium bicarbonate), washing soda (sodium carbonate), borax (sodium borate, a natural mold inhibitor) and household ammonia.

Try this recipe for an all-purpose cleaner:

- 1 gallon hot water
- ¼ cup household ammonia
- ¼ cup vinegar
- 1 tablespoon baking soda
- Clean household drains with hot water mixed with a half cup of baking soda.
- Don't invent home recipes for cleaning agents. For example, mixing chlorine bleach with ammonia produces poisonous fumes. Always read labels!
- Choose latex (water-based) paint instead of oil-based paint. Use it up instead of dumping it.
- Liquid laundry detergent is often a good substitute for a phosphate-based detergent.
- Instead of using pesticides on houseplants and your garden, try the following:
 - pulling weeds by hand
 - pulling off and disposing of infected leaves

- picking off larvae
- rotating garden crops to control soil-borne diseases and maintain soil nutrients
- using a registered soap solution such as a Safer brand product to kill aphids
- If you use commercial pesticides, follow labels and do not overapply them.
- Use sand instead of salt for increasing traction on winter ice.

Septic Tanks

- Make sure septic tanks are properly sized and maintained. Clean the tank every 3 to 5 years. Also, make sure the drain field is adequate and that the soil is able to process the effluent. If several houses are nearby, consider a community septic tank.
- Septic tank users should stagger wash loads throughout the week to avoid overloading the septic system.

FACT: You can make a difference.

An informed and active public can be a strong political force. Commit yourself to acting on your beliefs. You can make a difference!

- Become informed.
- Trust in the ability of the individual to take action and work together with other individuals, experts and politicians.
- Be willing to change your attitudes, behaviors and expectations.
- Educate your children and your friends. All environmental problems cannot be solved in a single gener-

ation; your children and their children will have to carry on the work.

For more information, please contact the University of Idaho Cooperative Extension System office in your county.

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Pesticide Residues — Recommendations for use are based on currently available labels for each pesticide listed. If followed carefully, residues should not exceed the established tolerances. To avoid excessive residues, follow label directions carefully with respect to rate, number of applications, and minimum interval between application and reentry or harvest.

Groundwater — To protect groundwater, when there is a choice of pesticides, the applicator should use the product least likely to leach.

Trade Names — To simplify information, trade names have been used. No endorsement of named products is intended nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

Quality Water for Idaho Publications

To order, contact the University of Idaho Cooperative Extension System office in your county or write to Ag Publications, Building J40, Idaho Street, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho 83843-4196 (Telephone: (208) 885-7982).

- CIS 861 Pesticide Handling Practices to Protect Groundwater
- CIS 865 Pesticides and Their Movement in Soil and Water
- CIS 872 Nitrate and Groundwater
- CIS 873 Water Testing
- CIS 874 Drinking Water Standards
- CIS 887 Idaho's Water Resource
- CIS 895 Laundry Problems and Water Quality



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