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Use water-saving devices to conserve energy, lower bills



I remember reading an interview in which a woman in her 70s was asked what she considered the most useful appliance or innovation in her modern kitchen. She replied simply, "Running water."

We all take our water supply for granted. In fact, each of us uses an average of 150 gallons of water per day in our homes for cooking, drinking, washing and flushing. Think how much more wisely we would use our water if we had to carry it into our houses from outdoor wells.

Conserving water has many benefits. Water conservation not only saves water, but also saves the energy needed to treat, pump and heat the water we use. It also saves money by reducing the amount of waste water that must be treated before it is released into the environment.

There are several easy ways to conserve water in your home:

- Repair leaks. One tiny faucet leak can waste 4,000 gallons of water per year, and a leaky toilet can waste thousands of gallons per month.
- Install a low-flow toilet. Low-flow toilets use only 1.6 gallons of water per flush, whereas regular toilets use about 5 gallons. Because low-flow toilets are built to decrease the vol-

ume of water and not the pressure, they operate as well as regular toilets.

- If you are not planning to install a new toilet soon, you can make a few simple modifications to your existing commode. A toilet dam is a piece of flexible plastic and metal placed in the toilet tank so that some water remains in the tank when the toilet is flushed. Other devices, so called "Flush Busters," can also achieve a substantial decrease in water usage without sacrificing water pressure. A simpler solution is to put an old bottle filled with water in the toilet's tank. (Don't use a brick, it can disintegrate and damage your plumbing.) Any one of these methods can reduce the amount of water used by a toilet by 30 to 50 percent.

- Installing low-flow-rate shower heads is an inexpensive and easy way to increase your water efficiency. These devices use about 2.5 gallons per minute (gpm), compared to the 8 to 12 gpm used by a regular shower head. Because these devices save hot water, they can substantially decrease the amount you pay to heat your water.

- Installing flow-control aerators on

your faucets will reduce the amount of water used from 4 gpm to 1 gpm.

- If you use an automatic dishwasher, make sure it is full every time you run it. A dishwasher uses about 12 gallons of water every time it runs, whether there are four or 40 dishes in it. The same principle applies to washing machines, which use about 40 gallons of water per load.

- Turn off the water while brushing your teeth. It doesn't make much sense to bring water all the way into your house, if you let it immediately run down the drain.

- When getting a drink, many people run the tap until the water is cold. Instead, fill a pitcher with water and store it in the refrigerator for when you want a cold drink.

The water-saving devices mentioned above are available from local plumbing supply and hardware stores. These easy-to-install devices can reduce the amount of water your household uses by thousands of gallons per year, which also means a lower water and energy bill.

Amory Lovins of the Rocky Mountain Institute once commented, "By installing a few simple water-saving devices, costing less than \$50, the average household can save more than 30,000 gallons of water and over \$60 in water and energy bills. If every American made this investment ... together we would save enough water to cover a football field 1,500 miles high, enough energy to equal seven huge power plants, and over \$1.3 billion per year."

For more information on water conservation and a free water conservation kit, call the Water and Light Department at 874-7325. If you have an IBM compatible computer and would like a program that explains how to increase your household water efficiency, send me a blank diskette; I will copy the program onto it and mail the disk back to you.

If you have a suggestion for a column, a gripe, a success story or whatever, write it down and send it to me, care of the Columbia Daily Tribune, PO Box 798, Columbia, Mo., 65205.