

Do You Have a Leak?

Do you have a leaky pipe? Is it in your home or outside? Is it your leak to repair, or is your local water system responsible for it? For consumers, these questions can be answered by taking a few easy steps to detect the leak.

1. Turn off all appliances that use water, such as refrigerators, washing machines, sinks, showers, toilets and outside sprinkler systems. Make sure no water is running or is being used inside or outside the home.

2. Check the meter on your meter box outside. Most meters have a leak indicator in the form of a rotating black-and-silver disk, a red triangle or a single red or black dial that moves when water is being used in the home. If this is moving with all water use stopped at the home, then there is a leak. If there is no indicator, then check the dials or numbers on the meter. Check again after 15 or 30 minutes. If they have moved, there is a leak.

3. Shut off the water at the main outside valve. This usually is located next to the water meter. Check the water inside the home by turning on the faucet. If water still flows after several seconds, the shut-off valve may not be working properly. Contact your water system. If the water stops, return to the meter.

4. Check the meter again. If the leak indicator or dials are still moving, then there is a leak between the shut-off valve and the meter. Contact the water system. If the meter is no longer running, chances are the leak is inside or just outside the home and is up to the homeowner to repair. Check appliances, sinks and toilets for possible leaks.

5. To check a toilet for a leak, turn the main water valve back on as well as the toilet. Flush the toilet, and as the back tank is filling, add two or three drops of food coloring. Wait 15-30 minutes. If the water in the bowl changes color, the flapper valve on the toilet is leaking and needs to be replaced. Flapper valves for most toilets can be found at standard hardware and home-improvement stores and are fairly easy to replace, or you can consult a plumber about repairs. Also, be sure the water line is not set too high. Otherwise, it could continually run down the overflow pipe. The water level can be adjusted by repositioning the float (often shaped like a round bulb or a canister).

