



Most Common Household Leaks

1. Toilet Flapper Valve: The most common household leak

The toilet flapper is a device that keeps the water in the tank from flowing into the bowl. When the handle is pulled, the flapper lifts up and allows the water to flow into the bowl, flushing the waste down the toilet.

Overtime, the flapper can become worn out, especially if cleaning tablets containing bleach are used in the tank.

- ➔ To test for a flapper leak, simply drop some food coloring or toilet dye tabs in the tank and wait 5 minutes. If the bowl water turns the color of the food coloring or tabs, you have a flapper leak.

2. Toilet Tank High Water Line: The second most common household leak

Toilet tanks are designed to not overflow by way of an overflow pipe next to the auto fill valve. If the float on the auto fill valve is malfunctioning or set too high, water will begin leaking into the overflow pipe and down through the back of the bowl.

The problem with water leaking into the overflow pipe is that, most of the time, this type of leak cannot be found with food coloring or dye tabs.

- ➔ To find a high water line leak, take off the toilet tank lid and inspect the water line. If the water line is near the top of the overflow pipe, shine a flashlight in the pipe. If you see water running into the overflow pipe you can either adjust the autofill float down to reduce the water line to 1/2 - 1 inch below the top of the overflow pipe. You may also want to replace the autofill device if it is defective.

3. Sprinkler Valves: The third most common household leak

Extended use and weather exposure can wear out sprinkler valves over time. When the valve fails, water will seep out and head to the lowest point in that sprinkler zone. You will probably be able to notice the run-off water in a nearby puddle.

- ➔ If you find a broken sprinkler valve, please replace it as soon as possible.

4. Hose Bibs: The fourth most common household leak

Hose bibs are the outside spigot that a garden hose attaches to. Over time, the packing inside the valve can wear out and start leaking through the shut off handle Or the "stem" part of the valve can become worn and not shut off correctly. A leaking hose bib can be repaired by

tightening the "stuffing box" or "packing nut" below the shut off handle. If the stem isn't seating properly, you may need to replace the seat washer or replace the hose bib entirely.

Showerheads

Some leaky showerheads can be fixed by making sure there is a tight connection between the showerhead and the pipe stem and by using pipe tape to secure it. Pipe tape, also called Teflon tape, is available at most hardware stores, is easy to apply, and can help tame unruly leaks. For more complicated valve leaks in showers that drip when not in use, contact an experienced handy person or licensed plumber.

Tip: It's also a good idea to check and, if needed, replace the washer or "o" ring inside the showerhead while making this repair.

Hot Tubs

A hot tub has many openings where water can leak. Each of the tub's jets may develop a leak over time. The plumbing behind the spa's shell may also leak. Keep in mind that you might have more than one leak, especially if the problem is with the jets. As one part fails, similar parts may do the same.

- ➔ Turn off power to the hot tub. Check the equipment compartment and the fittings and pipes leading to the pump and heater. Feel the pump for dampness and look for wetness. Follow each pipe to its jet looking for signs of leakage along the way.
- ➔ Place a drop of dark food coloring in the water in front of a jet. Water seeks the path of least resistance, so watch to see where the food coloring goes. If it flows out a jet, you may have found your leak. Look for the colored water to leak out on the outside of the spa's shell. Repeat for all the remaining jets.
- ➔ Mark the water level on the inside of the spa with a grease pencil or crayon. Turn the spa on and let it run for 24 hours. Turn it off and mark the new water level. Add enough water to fill the hot tub to the original water mark. Let the pool set in the off position for 24 hours. Mark how much the water level falls when the spa is off. If the water drops equally with the spa running and not, there is a crack in the spa's shell. Rapid loss with the pump running indicates a leak after the water leaves the pump. More loss with the pump off indicates that the leak is in the water line before the pump.

Tip: You may need to pull out urethane foam insulation from around the pipes to expose them. It's not uncommon for mice and other small animals to make their nests in the insulation.