

Plumbing Maintenance: Save Money and Avoid Costly Repairs

Just like flipping a switch for the lights, we expect water to flow when we turn on the tap. Plumbing, alongside electrical and HVAC systems, is one of the three essential components of a home. While plumbing systems require minimal maintenance, a few key tasks can improve efficiency, prevent costly repairs, and keep your home running smoothly.

Water Heaters

Regular maintenance of your water heater can extend its lifespan and improve efficiency, saving you money on energy costs and future replacements. A typical water heater lasts 10–13 years and replacing one can cost upwards of \$2,000. Delaying this expense with proper care makes financial sense.

The most common cause of water heater failure is a leaking tank, often due to sediment buildup or galvanic corrosion. Water heaters are equipped with a **sacrificial anode rod**, which protects the tank from corrosion by attracting corrosive elements to itself instead of the tank lining.

To maintain your water heater:

- **Inspect the anode rod** periodically and replace it if necessary.
- **Flush the tank** to remove sediment buildup, which can reduce efficiency and lead to premature failure.

If you're handy, these tasks are manageable DIY projects. Otherwise, a qualified plumber can assist.

Toilets

A leaking toilet can send money literally down the drain. Over time, the **flapper** inside the tank deteriorates, causing water to leak and waste gallons unnecessarily. Replacing this inexpensive part is a simple fix that can lower your water bill.

Another concern is the toilet's attachment to the floor. A **loose toilet** can cause small leaks, leading to dry rot and subfloor damage. To check if your toilet is secure, give it a slight lateral shake. If it wobbles, it could be leaking and should be inspected.

Waste Lines

What goes down the drain today could cause problems in the future. Certain items should never go down the sink, even if you have a garbage disposal.

Avoid putting these down the drain:

- **Oil, grease, and butter** – These fats solidify and cling to pipes, trapping other debris.
- **Coffee grounds** – They don't dissolve and can mix with grease, accelerating clogs.
- **Rice, pasta, and flour** – These starchy foods swell with water and become glue-like in pipes.
- **Fibrous vegetables** – Celery, potato peels, and broccoli create stringy webs that trap other debris.
- **Eggshells and seafood shells** – These small, gritty fragments can clog disposal units and pipes.
- **Medications** – While not harmful to plumbing, medications should never enter the sewer system. Instead, dispose of them properly at a pharmacy or doctor's office.

Keeping your drains clear is essential to prevent blockages and costly plumbing emergencies.

Signs of a Potential Plumbing Backup:

- Slow drainage in sinks or tubs
- Gurgling sounds from drains
- Foul odors from pipes
- Water backing up into sinks, tubs, or toilets
- Sewage or water pooling in your crawl space

Plumbing backups can cause significant structural damage, foundation issues, and contamination of personal belongings. Riane Tynan of ServiceMaster Restore in Nampa warns, *“Plumbing backups often happen at the worst times. They require immediate attention to prevent costly repairs. Prolonged exposure to water can weaken structural integrity, cause foundation shifting, and create serious health hazards.”*

We hope these tips help you maintain a healthy plumbing system in your home. If you have questions about your plumbing or any other home system, feel free to reach out—we’re happy to help!

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