

IS YOUR TOILET RUNNING?

Getting to the bottom of a leaky toilet can be perplexing. To find out where the leak is coming from, some detective work is in order.

FIND THE CULPRIT.

To find out if a toilet leak is being caused by the flapper, put 1 teaspoon of food coloring or a dye tablet into the tank. Wait about 15 minutes.

If color enters the toilet bowl, you probably have a leaky flapper.

IT'S NOT LOW-FLOW IF IT LEAKS.

Got an ultra low-flow toilet? Think you're saving water and lowering your utility bill? Well, maybe not. The truth is, the savings you expect will be lost if you have a leak.



GET A CONSERVATION CLUE.

Taking baths and showers, flushing the toilet, washing clothes and doing dishes are all “necessary” uses of water. However, the amount you use each time can add up. Fortunately, you have control over how much water you use in and around your home.

While flushing the toilet uses the most water in your home, it's also the easiest place to conserve. Make sure everything is working properly and you'll save water.

In addition to checking the flapper and chain, check the handle. If the toilet handle sticks in the flush position and water runs constantly, replace or adjust it immediately. Also, never use the toilet as a trash can — every flush uses 1.6 to 6 gallons of water, depending on your toilet.

For more information about water conservation visit the Pinellas County Utilities Web site at www.pinellascounty.org/utilities.



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SOLVING THE MYSTERY of the leaky flapper

BY PINELLAS COUNTY UTILITIES



PUT A LID ON LEAKS. CHECK YOUR FLAPPER.

What's a flapper?

A toilet flapper is a rubber mechanism in your toilet tank that's the moving part of the flush valve. A flapper seals water into the tank and allows water to exit the tank when you flush.

Why do you need to check it?

Flappers deteriorate over time as a result of in-tank cleaning products and chemicals used by utilities. That's why they need to be checked every year to make sure they're fitting tightly over the flush tube. Otherwise, you end up with a leaky toilet that can waste a lot of water and seriously increase your utility bill.

How much water does a bad flapper waste?

Depending on the extent of the leak, a warped or poorly fitting flapper can waste up to 200 gallons of water a day and may cost you hundreds of dollars a year.

FLAP OFF. FLAP ON. THE FLAPPER.

Follow these fast and easy steps for replacing your flapper:

1. Close the water supply to your toilet. This is typically located behind the bowl, below the tank. If there's no valve or the valve is stuck, turn off the water to the house.

2. Flush the water in the tank and note the length of the chain from the flush handle to the flapper. This will save time when installing the new flapper.
3. If the flapper is connected by a circular ring around the tube, remove the refill tube from the overflow tube. (If not, go directly to step 4.)
4. Remove the chain from the flush lever, then remove the old flapper by sliding it up and off the overflow tube. Or, unhook the flapper ears from the overflow tube. For new plastic flush valves, you may have to bend the flapper ears out and off the pins on the flush valve.



5. Write down the toilet manufacturer and the model number, if you know it. The manufacturer's name is often stamped on the outside of the bowl near the seat hinges and the model number is normally on the inside back of the tank.
6. Take the old flapper and the information you've noted to a plumbing supply or home improvement store that carries replacement flappers.

If you have a 1.6 gpf (gallons per flush) toilet, the store should have information on the correct replacement flapper and settings for adjustable flappers. Or before you go, you can look it up online at www.ToiletFlapper.org.

Be prepared to pay \$2 - \$10 for the right flapper. And don't forget to get a beaded metal flapper chain replacement.

7. Install the new flapper by sliding it down and over the overflow tube until the ring touches the bottom of the tank, with the flapper bulb centered on the valve opening.

For plastic valves, cut the ring off the flapper along the lines marked "cut" and slip the ears of the flapper over the pins on the flush valves.

8. Reattach the chain to the flush lever and adjust the length as necessary.
9. Turn the water supply valve on slowly, fill the tank and make sure the flapper opens, closes and seals properly.

Flush Valve

Flapper

Flush Valve
Discharge Tube

Flapper Detail

Ring

Ear