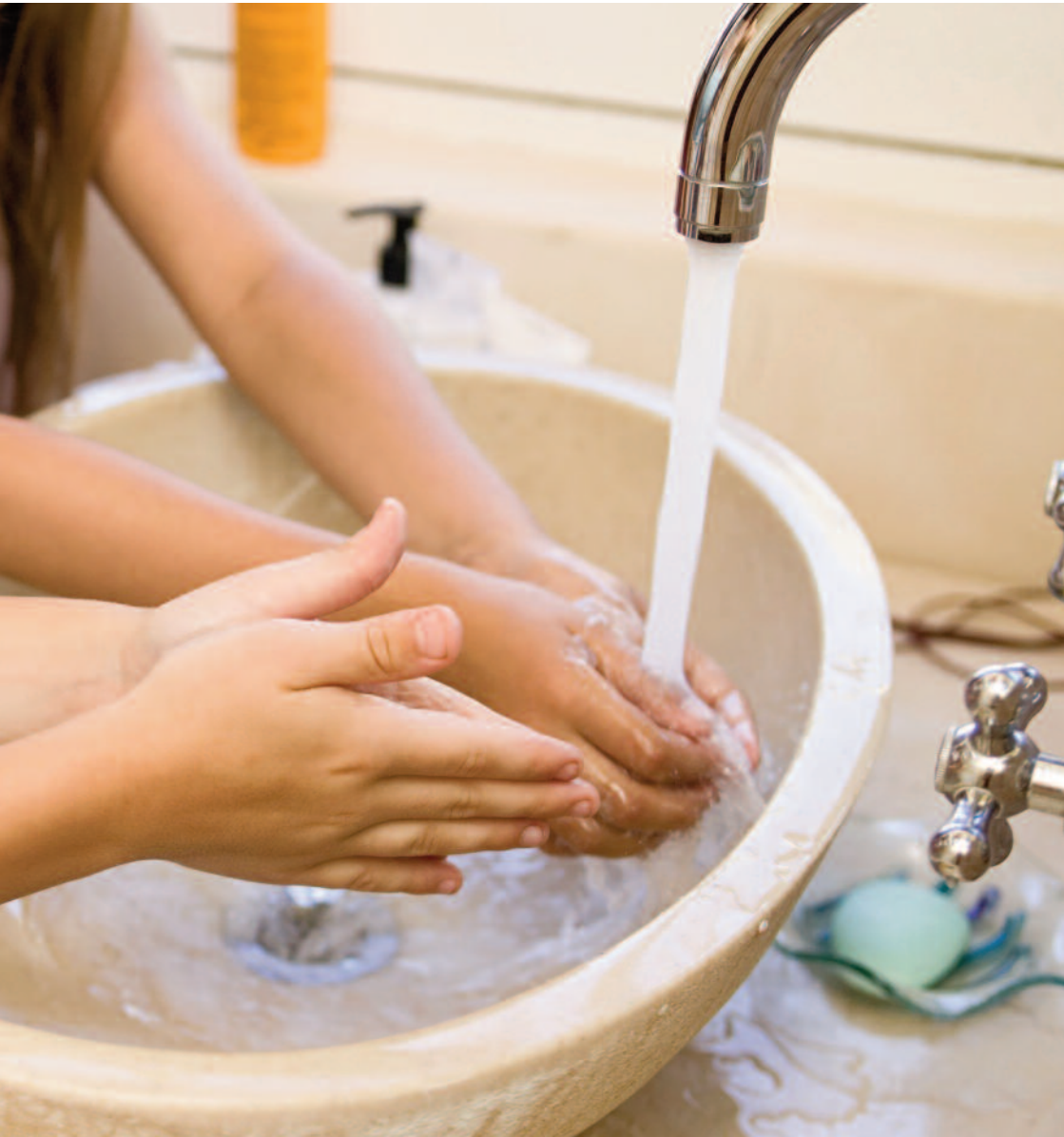
Understanding your water usage

in the home and in the garden

South West Water



Introduction

We've sent you this booklet to help you understand how and why you may be using more water than expected.

This could be due to:

- Faulty plumbing and appliances, e.g. toilet cistern overfilling
- A leak on your underground pipework or internal plumbing
- High use of water-using appliances, e.g. power showers, hosepipes
- Other household members using more water than you expect.

South West Water's legal responsibility for water service pipes ends at the boundary of your property. If you're the homeowner, just as you're responsible for your plumbing, you're also responsible for keeping the supply pipe in good order from the boundary of the street all the way into your home, even if your water meter is indoors.

Facts

Your bill is based on cubic metres of water and one cubic metre equals 1,000 litres or approximately 220 gallons (one gallon = eight pints).

The average amount of water used per person in a metered household in our region is 124 litres (27 gallons) a day.

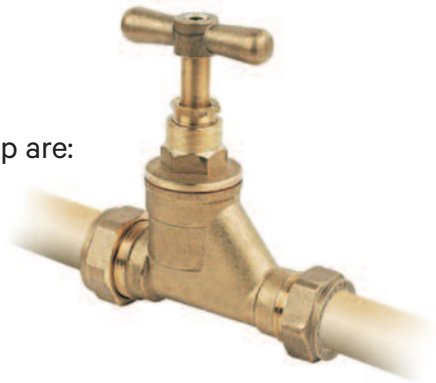
It's extremely rare for domestic meters to be faulty. They are tested for accuracy and sealed before leaving the factory.

We regularly test meters and the very few that aren't accurate have usually slowed down or stopped.

Investigating your water usage

Follow these steps to understand more about your water use.

Step 1 Check your internal stop tap is working



Common locations for an internal stop tap are:

- Under the kitchen sink
- In a connecting garage
- In the hot water tank cupboard

It's vital that your internal stop tap is working in order to complete all checks on your supply pipe.
If it isn't you may need to contact a plumber.

Now follow the steps below:

Step 2 Locate your water meter

Step 3 Read your meter

Step 4 Check for unexpected night usage

Step 5 Check for leakage on your supply pipe

Step 6 Check for leakage on your internal plumbing

Step 7 Find out how much water-appliances use

Step 2 Locate your water meter

The water meter is usually located either close to the boundary of your property, possibly in your front garden, or in the footpath immediately outside your property.

The water meter sits inside a chamber connected to your supply pipe.

Sometimes the water meter will have been fitted inside the house. If so, it's often located under the sink or near the internal stop tap.

Step 3 Read your water meter

If your meter is in the footpath, please check that it's safe to read.

Access the meter by lifting the outer lid of the chamber using a screwdriver. If you see water in the chamber don't worry; this is likely to be rainwater or groundwater.

Remove or tilt the polystyrene frost cover to view the meter face. Check that the unique serial number on the meter matches the meter number shown on your bill to ensure you've located the correct meter.

Looking at the meter face, read the black numbers on the white dials; these measure cubic metres and are the numbers on which your bill is based. There are five white dials.

You may also need to read the white numbers on the red dials which measure litres. Most meters have three red dials, but some may only have two.

Step 4 Check for unexpected night usage

During the night your water consumption should be very low or even zero. Before completing this step, please ensure that no water-using appliances will be operating during this period and, if necessary, turn them off.

Take a meter reading (see **Step 3**) before going to bed.

Write your reading here: | | | | | | | | |

Take another reading first thing in the morning before any water is used.

Write your reading here: | | | | | | | | |

Compare the two readings – if they are different it could be due to faulty plumbing, like an overflow in your toilet or attic tank. If there are no obvious causes, please proceed to **Step 5.**

If a nightly meter reading check indicates no problems, please follow **Step 7** to see what else could be the cause of your high water consumption.

Step 5 Check for leakage on your supply pipe, between your meter and internal stop tap

You'll need to have located your meter and internal stop tap to be able to complete this check (see **Steps 1** and **2)**.

Switch off all internal water-using appliances and turn off your internal stop tap (usually clockwise to close). Check that no water comes out of the cold tap in the kitchen – you may need to let it run for a few minutes before it stops. If the water continues to flow, either you haven't fully shut off the internal stop tap or it may be faulty and need replacing.

Now carry out the following to test for leakage on your external supply pipe.

Locate your meter and take a reading. Read all the dials.

If the dials are moving, and there is no known explanation for this water usage, you may have a leak.

Please ring our Services Helpline on

0344 346 2020

and you'll be given information about what to do next.

(Minicom users only: 0800 169 9965)

Write your reading here:

Don't use any water for an hour

After an hour, take another reading.

Write your reading here:

Do the two readings differ?

Yes

Water has passed through the meter meaning you may have a leak. Please ring our Services Helpline on

0344 346 2020

and you'll be given information about what to do next.
(Minicom users: 0800 169 9965)

No

Please proceed to

Step 6

Step 6 Check for leakage on your internal plumbing

There are two ways of doing this. Follow **Step 4** checking for overnight usage, or do the following:

1. If you've turned off the water in your home at your internal stop tap to carry out **Step 5,** turn it back on.

2. Wait another hour, making sure you're not using any water.

3. Take another meter reading.

Write your reading here:

Does this reading differ from the two readings you took in Step 5

Yes

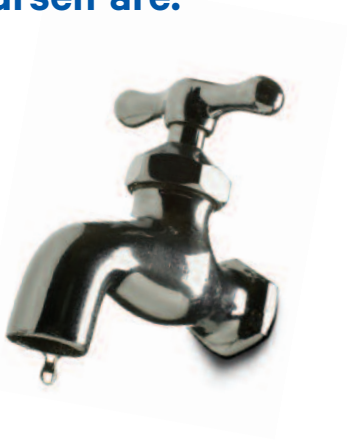
You may have a leak on your internal plumbing and you may need to get a plumber to help you find it.
Find a Watersafe-approved plumber in your area at www.watersafe.org.uk

No

Please proceed to

Step 7

Simple things you can check yourself are:



Toilet cisterns

Are these overflowing?

Check that the overflow pipe hasn't been connected back into the toilet pan; it could be overflowing and you won't know if this has happened. You can do this by lifting the lid of the cistern and checking to see whether there's water going into the overflow.

Taps

Do you have any taps dripping inside or outside the property?

Roof tank overflows

Are these overflowing?

Check this by looking outside the property at roof level for water flowing out of a pipe near the roof.

If you have a leak you may need to get a plumber to fix it – go to www.watersafe.org.uk to find an approved local plumber. Please act quickly as you'll be paying for the water that's being wasted.

Step 7 Find out how much water-appliances use

Certain appliances can use large amounts of water. Use your meter to measure their usage; it may help explain why you're using more water than you expected.

The water usage checklist on the next page will help you estimate your annual water use.

Watering gardens

A garden hose or sprinkler system will typically use around 15 litres per minute.

Power showers

A normal shower uses around 35 litres in four minutes, but power showers can use up to 65 litres for the same period. Take a reading before and after you shower, making sure no other water-appliances are in use. Also check how often and for how long other members of your household use the shower.

Toilet flushes

A standard flush uses seven litres; a dual flush can cut that to five litres, while older systems can use as much as 12 litres.
If you have an old cistern, try installing a water-saving device such as a hog or hippo, available by calling our Water conservation helpline on 0800 378 937.

Baths

An average bath uses 85 litres.

Washing machines

Modern, efficient washing machines use 45 litres per load compared with 65 litres for older machines.

Swimming pools

Topping up swimming pools with a hosepipe can use up to 1,000 litres an hour. Assess how much water you use by taking a meter reading before and after topping up your pool or pond.

Other things to consider

Consumption can increase in the summer, through watering the garden, spring cleaning or taking more showers.

Have you had visitors? The more people in your home, the higher your water consumption.

Water usage checklist

Old appliances use more water than more modern ones, so choose a figure from the range provided to match your circumstances.

Activity	Litres		Frequency	Water used (litres)
Bath	85 x		(number per week)	
Shower (ordinary)	35 x		(number per week)	
Shower (power)	65 x		(number per week)	
Toilet flushes	5-7 x		(number per day) x 7	
Washing machine	45-65 x		(number of uses per week)	
Dishwasher	12-20 x		(number of uses per week)	
Cooking, drinking, handbasin use, washing dishes and clothes by hand	30 x		(number of people in house) x 7	
			Weekly use:	
Plus			**x 52 = Annual use:**	
Hosepipe/sprinkler	15 x		(number of minutes used a week	
	x		(number of weeks used) =	
			Total annual use (litres):	
			Divide total annual use (litres) by 1,000 to get cubic metres:	

Step 8 Call our Services Helpline

If you've completed the checks and you don't have a leak on your supply pipe or internal plumbing and you believe your meter is showing that you use more water than you do, please call our **Services Helpline on 0344 346 2020.**
(Minicom users only: 0800 169 9965)

We'll put you through to our dedicated Case Management Team who'll discuss what will happen next.

Special services

If you find that you're unable to carry out the checks in this booklet yourself or don't have someone to help you, please call our Services Helpline on the numbers provided above.

Water conservation helpline

Free advice and details of water-saving product offers

0800 378937

(9am to 5pm Mondays to Fridays)

South West Water