



# Looking for Leaks

## A Homeowner's How-To List

**You may routinely put new washers in the faucets and fix any leaks you can see, inside the house and around the yard but do you have any invisible leaks?**

It's time to check inside your meter box. It's usually in front of the house near the curb. Lift the cover aside to expose your water meter. Flip open its hinged lid. You'll find either a straight-reading or round-reading dial.

On straight-reading meters, the large needle on the dial is used for testing. On round-reading dials, the test dial will either be labeled "one foot" or will have no markings.

With all of the faucets (inside and outside) shut tightly, mark the test-needle by laying a straight-pin or toothpick exactly on top of it.

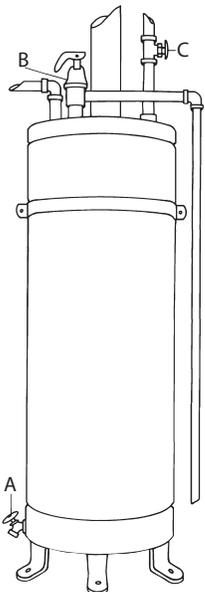
- A half hour later, check the dial again. If the test-needle has moved – and no one has used any water – you probably have a leak and should do some more investigating.
- To determine if the leak is inside or outside the house, locate the main shut-off valve (usually at the front of the house underneath an outside faucet). If the dial moves while the main house valve is turned off, you probably have an



underground house line leak. Inspect along a straight line between the meter and the house valve for surface water or a wet or super-green spot.

*Note:* Leaks that may occur intermittently (like a running toilet, irrigation system leak or faulty swimming pool fill valve) will not always continuously register at the meter. These are all early steps you can take to locate the problem yourself before calling a plumber or leak detection specialist. (They're in the yellow pages under "pipe and leak detection.")

**Read Your Meter – Often!** One way to find out the 'why' of high water consumption is to determine the 'what' and 'when' consumption is occurring. Read your meter every day or every week and keep a log of the readings. Is your consumption consistent or is it higher on some days? If your sprinkler system has a timer, read the meter the day before and the day after an irrigation cycle. How much water is going into the garden? How does that compare to the days without irrigation? For tips on reading meters see the [ebmud.com](http://ebmud.com) website (under Account Information) or call 1-866-403-2683 to request a 'Meet Your Meter' pamphlet.



### Check for Water Heater Leaks

#### Little Leaks Can Mean Big Problems

Most people visit their water heaters only if the hot water stops. Check yours. If you notice a puddle of water around the bottom of the tank, it probably indicates a leak caused by corrosion – a sure sign of old age, and the most common reason for replacing the tank. If the tank wall is corroding, more problems are coming, and it's time to retire the tank and get a new energy saving model.

Water heaters last about 15 years with proper care. To clear out any sediment, flush a few quarts of water from the drain valve at the bottom of the tank into a bucket about every six months – maybe when you change fire alarm batteries around the house. Also operate the pressure-relief valve at the top of the tank. Don't worry if a little water leaks out; that means it's working. Also close and reopen the cold-water inlet valve at the top, so you're sure it's easy to operate in an emergency.

A: Drain Valve; B: Pressure relief valve;  
C: Cold-Water inlet valve

### Leaks Can Hide Outside

#### Look for Bright Green or "Soft" Areas

Whatever irrigation equipment you have – manual, sprinkler or drip – be aware that not all leaks are obvious. First check for overly green or soggy spots, where broken spray heads or bubblers or underground pipe cracks will tell on themselves. Buried pipes, hoses or drip lines leaking into sandy, porous soil may not show up clearly. Automatic sprinkler and drip systems that generate a hissing sound are likely leaking. Also, remember to check drip systems for damage from foot traffic or gnawing pets or pests. Got leaky hoses? Repair them with waterproof tape. Dribbling spray nozzle connection? Wrap the hose threads with Teflon tape.



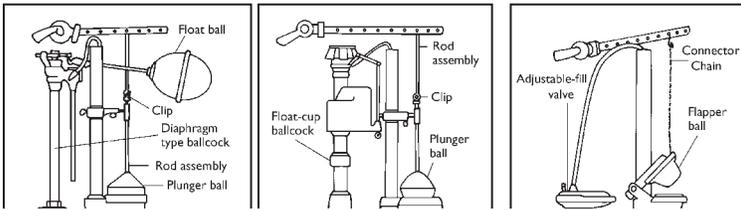
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### Eliminate the Most Common Leaks

#### Check the Toilet First

Toilet leaks are the most common household leaks and the number one cause of high water bills. Every homeowner should know how to determine what the problem is. The leak may be caused by a failing flapper, plunger ball, float ball or fill valve. Listen closely for hissing or trickling sounds, or a periodic “whoosh” caused by the toilet topping itself off every few minutes. These are all tell-tale signs that a leak exists.



**TYPICAL TOILET TANKS:** Here are some toilet tanks with different ballcock and plunger ball arrangements. Shut off the water, empty the tank and take damaged parts to the hardware store for a perfect match.

The first step is to drop a dye tablet or several drops of ordinary food coloring into the toilet tank. (EBMUD has free dye tabs for you.) Wait a few minutes. If color shows up in the toilet bowl, you have a leak.

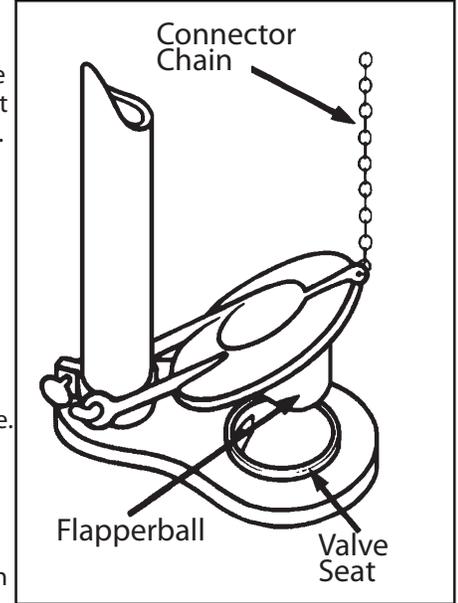
The second step is to turn off the toilet’s water supply (usually it has a diamond shaped handle, near the wall at the base of the toilet) and mark the water level inside the tank. Wait 15 minutes and then

check the water level. If it has dropped below your mark, the problem is at the bottom of the toilet tank at the flapper or plunger ball.

However – if the water level has stayed the same, then the problem is an overflow near the top of the tank, involving the float ball or the fill valve – or both.

All of these items are easy and inexpensive to replace. Look for products labeled chloramine resistant at your local hardware store.

If you are not “handy” by all means hire a handyman or plumber to help. If you do find and fix a leak in your plumbing or irrigation system, you may call our Contact Center at 1-866-403-2683 to inquire about a possible adjustment to your bill once repairs are completed. (Keep your receipts.) Our staff is available to assist you Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Thanks for all you do to find and fix leaks.



If you replace a flapper ball, take the old one to the hardware store to get the best match.

### Check for Swimming Pool Leaks

#### Try the “Bucket Test”

Does your pool leak? Find out! If the pool has an automatic fill valve, make sure it is fully turned off. Then place a bucket on a pool step. Fill the bucket with pool water to about three to four inches from the top, matching the water level in the bucket with the level of the pool. Carefully mark the water levels on both the inside and outside of the bucket. Wait 24 hours. If the pool water has dropped below than the bucket’s contents, you may have a leak. Contact a pool professional for help.

### Get More Help

#### Check Our Website

No single document can cover all the ways available to you to locate leaks and save water. Please review the many tips on our [WaterSmart Center at ebmud.com](http://WaterSmart.Center.at.ebmud.com). You can get information on rebates and also check your water use. On the main web page select “My Account” under the Customer Service headline.

