



Ways to Limit Water Use to Forty Gallons Per Day

Each day, we use water in many ways inside our homes. Estimates indicate that each person in the United States uses between 50 and 70 gallons of water per day. There are many water conservation measures that can be used to limit water use. Here's an example of how a family of four can limit their water use to an average of 40 gallons per person per day during a seven day period.

- ! For laundry - Most washing machines use approximately 40 gallons of water for a full load. If your washer has a permanent press cycle, the tub may fill one additional time, which would use an additional 20 gallons of water. To limit water use when doing laundry, wash only full loads and avoid using the permanent press cycle. A family of four should try to limit laundry to 4 full loads per week.

Total for week: 160 gallons

- ! For showers - Adults take one 5-minute shower per day. With a showerhead that flows at a rate of 2.5 gallons per minute, water use would be 12.5 gallons per shower. All showerheads manufactured after 1995 must flow at no more than 2.5 gallons per minute. If you have an older shower, now might be a good time to change.

Total for week: 175 gallons

- ! For baths - Children take 4 tub baths and 3 sponge baths per week. Water use for tub baths is limited to 12 gallons per bath. For sponge baths, limit water use to 1 gallon per bath.

Total for week: 102 gallons

- ! For hand washing - Each member of the family limits hand washing with water to 3 times per day. A supply of hand sanitizer or anti-bacterial wipes should be kept on hand for other times hands need to be cleaned. When washing hands, wet them, turn the faucet off, lather hands, and turn the faucet back on to rinse. Water use would be approximately ½ gallon per washing.

Total for week: 42 gallons

- ! For brushing teeth - Each family member brushes their teeth 2 times per day but limits water use to 1 pint per brushing. This can be achieved by wetting your brush and filling a cup with water for rinsing.

Total for week: 7 gallons

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- ! For shaving - Limit water use when shaving to ½ gallon each time. Do this by partially filling the basin with water, and dipping your razor to rinse.

Total for week: 3 gallons

- ! For toilet flushing - The amount of water used each time the toilet is flushed varies depending upon the age of your toilet. Most toilets found in homes today will use 3.5 - 5 gallons of water per flush. Toilets manufactured after 1978 use 3.5 gallons, while those manufactured since 1995 use only 1.6 gallons per flush. If your toilet uses 5 gallons per flush, you can cut that amount to 4 gallons by filling a 1-gallon plastic jug or bag and placing it in the toilet tank. To further reduce the amount of water flushed away, limit family members to 4 flushes per day. This will likely mean not flushing the toilet every time it is used. If a family of four limits water use to 4 gallons per flush and limits flushes to 4 per person per day, they can dramatically reduce water use.

Total for week: 448 gallons

- ! For dishwashing - On average, an automatic dishwasher uses 15 gallons of water per load. Hand-washing dishes can use as much as 20 gallons of water for the same amount of dishes. To limit water use, use the dishwasher only when it is full. If your dishwasher has a water saver cycle, use it. When hand-washing dishes, do not rinse them under a running tap. Use a small pan or basin of hot water instead. Limit water use further by using paper plates and plastic cups and utensils for some meals. Try to keep water use for dishwashing to an average of 15 gallons per day.

Total for week: 105 gallons

- ! Food preparation / drinking - Water is used in many different ways when preparing foods and beverages. To conserve water, wash and peel vegetables in a small pan of water instead of under a running tap. When cooking with water, choose appropriate sized pans with tight fitting lids to avoid water loss to evaporation. Keep a pitcher or jug of water in the refrigerator for drinking. If concern for water use is high, choose alternatives to concentrated juices and powdered drink mixes. Strive to limit water use for cooking and drinking to less than 5 gallons per day, but do not limit fluid intake for family members.

Total for week: 35 gallons

By following the suggestions outlined, a family of four can limit their water use to 1,077 gallons per week. If the goal is to limit water use to 40 gallons per person per day, the family would have an additional 43 gallons of water available for other uses during the week.

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References:

- American Water Works Association, *Water Use Inside the Home*, 1998 Water Use Summary.
- Consumer Reports, *Low-Flow Shower Heads*, February, 1995.
- Consumer Reports, *Low-Flow Toilets*, February, 1995.
- Heaton, Linda, Tom Ilvento, and Joe Taraba, *Conserving Water At Home (IP-2)*, University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, July, 1989.

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