

CHECKING FOR WATER LEAKS

How do I know if I have a leak?

If you get a bill that seems unusually high, the first thing to check is the water meter. On the top of your water meter is a register that contains the water reading. Make sure that all faucets and appliances that use water such as washing machines and dishwashers are off. Watch the meter register for at least three minutes. If the dials are moving at all, there is a leak somewhere. Often, this means that the toilet is not shutting off.

Common Toilet Water Problems:

The most common home plumbing problem would either be the dripping faucet or the running toilet. Less common are the hot water tank or a furnace humidifier. Of all these the running toilet is the most serious. It can waste hundreds of gallons of water a day.

Putting an end to the problem is easy - often just a 30-second task.

All the action is in the flush tank. When you flip the flush lever, the tank ball is lifted, opening the drain beneath it in the bottom of the tank. The water stored in the tank runs out the drain and flushes the bowl. When the tank is nearly empty, the tank ball drops back down, closing off the drain to stop the flush. Now the tank begins to fill with water. As the level rises, it lifts the float ball. This ball controls a valve. When the water level in the tank reaches the proper point, the rising float ball shuts off the valve and the tank stops filling.

Here are the most common problems and how to fix them:

Water runs continuously and the tank will not fill.

The problem is that the tank ball is not closing off the drain at the end of the flush. Remove the cover to the tank and take a look. Is the tank ball hanging above its seat? If so, see what is holding it up. The lift rod may be binding in its guide or in it may be hanging up where it hooks onto the trip lever.

If the tank ball is not hanging up, maybe it is not centered on its seat. If so, twist the rod guide on the overflow tube so that the tank ball rests properly. If the tank ball is seated properly yet the tank still won't fill, check the ball for wear or build-up of rust or debris. Do the same for the seat. Remove rust with fine sandpaper and replace worn or damaged parts. To remove debris, rub with a clean cloth around the tank ball and seat.

Some toilets may have a flapper instead of a tank ball, and a chain instead of a lift rod. If so, the problem may be a misaligned or worn flapper or a kinked chain.

Tank fills, but water keeps running.

A water logged float ball often causes this. Lift up on the float arm. If the water stops flowing, screw the float ball off its arm and see if it is water logged. Water inside? Replace it with a foam ball. This type will not go bad.

If lifting the float arm doesn't stop the flow of water, jiggle the arm up and down a few times. This may dislodge any corrosion that's making the valve stick open. If jiggling the arm doesn't help, the valve is bad and needs replacement. It's a good idea to replace it with the Fluidmaster Valve, a modern improvement over the old type. It comes with installation instructions.

To correct this, bend the float ball arm downward until proper level is obtained. For Fluidmasters, adjust the float to a lower level.

One last possibility: If valve and float are okay, check the water level.

Is water flowing down the overflow tube? Flush and watch the tank refill. The water should stop flowing when the water reaches the "water level" mark inside the tank (or about $\frac{3}{4}$ " below the top of the overflow tube).

Sometimes it is easy to check a tank ball leak by placing a special toilet dye strip or some food coloring in the flush tank. Let it remain without flushing for one to two hours. If any coloring seeps into the toilet bowl, replace the tank ball.

Below is a diagram of a toilet tank to help you identify the flush tank parts.

