

Leaks and leak fixing - meters and mains

Water Wise simplifies leak fixing! Learn how to take readings from your water meter to determine if you have a household leak and find out where your water mains tap is.

Leaks in the household or garden can be frustrating and hard on the wallet. Luckily, many household or garden leaks can be fixed relatively easily. In order to assist you with your DIY leak fixing, Water Wise has compiled a series of articles that focus on areas where leaks are most likely to occur.

However, before you consider fixing a leak yourself you need to determine, firstly, where the leak is, and secondly how to stop the water flow to the area where the leak is.

Reading your water meter

Knowing how to read a water meter is the first step in determining whether you have a leak. Most water meters are volumetric and have a rolling counter (row of numbers) to indicate the amount of water used (Fig 1). The water meter is usually found near the entrance to your property or just at the boundary to your property. Your meter may be located in a hole in the ground (Fig 2) and is often covered by a strong metal plate.



Fig 1. Standard volumetric water meter

Checking for leaks

Often, you may not realise that you have a household or garden leak until you receive an abnormally large water bill. To prevent against this happening, it is good practise to do regular checks for household and garden leaks.

To test for leaks in the household, ask all members of the house to stop using water. After half an hour, take a reading on your water meter. Wait for another hour, ensuring that absolutely no water is being used in the house. After that

hour, take another reading. Subtract the first reading from the second reading. If there is a difference between these two amounts, this may indicate a leak. The leak may be in your house or in the garden, if you have a garden hose or irrigation system. Leaks may also occur in underground water pipes.



Fig 2. An underground water meter with cover

Leak-fixing: where to start

Firstly, it is very important to find out where the water mains tap/stopcock is so that you can turn the water off in the house if necessary. The stopcock is usually a large round tap (Fig 3) that once closed, will stop all water flowing to your property. Always close the stopcock before attempting to fix a leak. However, the stopcock should only be closed when absolutely necessary, as the change in pressure that occurs when the tap is closed or opened can cause damage to pipes and pipe brackets.



Fig 3. Standard household stopcock or water mains tap

The water mains tap or stopcock is often close to the water meter, normally on the property boundary. Make sure you are familiar with the position of your water mains tap/stopcock. If you are uncertain as to how to repair a leak, rather consult a plumber first.