

# Leaks and leak fixing

## - toilets

Unusually high water bills may be the result of a leaking toilet. A leaking toilet can waste up to 22 500 litres of clean, potable water a month. Water Wise assists you with an easy DIY solution to repair a leaky cistern.



A leaky toilet can waste between 130 and 750 litres of water a day, depending on the cause of the leak. Most leaky toilets are the result of old or worn out washers.

You can check for leaks in the toilet cistern (Fig 1) by dropping a small amount of food colouring or instant coffee into the water in the cistern. If there is a leak, the water in the toilet bowl will show signs of the food colouring or coffee. Similarly, water trickling down the sides of the toilet bowl and sounds of water coming from a toilet that is not in use may indicate a leaking toilet. These types of leaks are usually indicative of faulty or degraded washers or seals.



Fig 1. The inside of a standard toilet cistern.

To test for other possible leaks in your plumbing system, read the Water Wise article "Leaks and leak fixing: meters and mains".

### DIY toilet repair

Before you consider any DIY plumbing work, make sure you know where the water mains tap/stopcock is so that you can turn the water off in the house if necessary. The stopcock should always be turned off before attempting to fix a leak. For a picture of a standard household stopcock, please refer to the Water Wise article "Leaks and leak fixing: meters and mains".

Generally, there are three main places a toilet can leak from. A worn-out washer at the outlet port or flush valve from the cistern to the bowl (point 1 in Fig 1) can cause leaks into the toilet bowl. Faulty washers at the side intake valve to the cistern (point 2 in Fig 1) can cause water to leak into the cistern, which over time can cause an overflow of water into the toilet bowl. Also, a misaligned filler float or floating arm can cause an overflow of water into the cistern (point 3 in Fig 1).

Once you have turned off the water to your house, you can start working on fixing your toilet leak.

### 1. To fix a faulty washer at the outlet to the cistern, follow these steps:

- Carefully remove the flush valve. Then remove the plunger washer from the flush valve by unscrewing the wing screws.
- The plunger washer fits into a groove at the base of the plunger. To remove, simply pry the old washer out with a screwdriver.
- Install the new washer with your fingers and without damaging it, and reassemble the entire valve body.

### 2. To fix a worn washer at the side intake valve:

- Loosen or unscrew the top of the intake valve.
- Remove the washer from inside the top of the intake valve and insert a new washer.
- Secure the top of the intake valve.
- Turn the water back on to ensure the intake valve is working correctly and the cistern is filling with water.

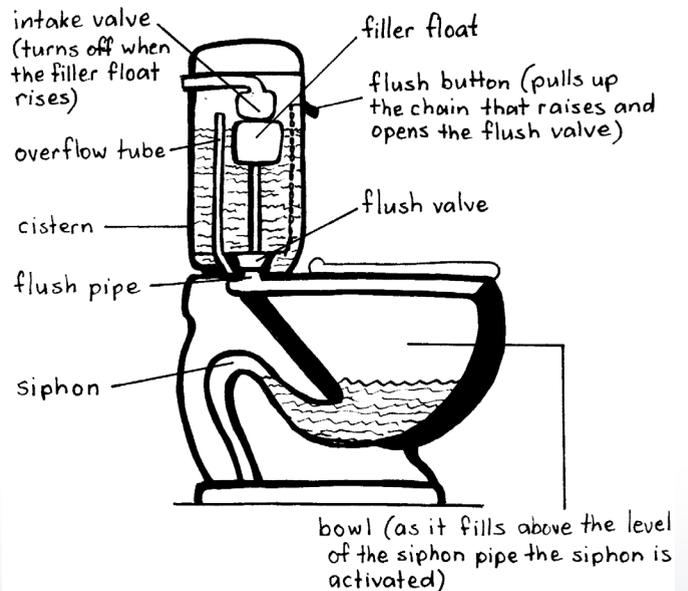


Fig 2. Cut-away image of a toilet bowl and cistern.

### 3. An overflowing cistern can be fixed simply by:

- gently bending the floating arm connected to the filler float downward so that less water enters the cistern.

Fixing simple leaks in the home can be done following the tips above. However, if you suspect a more serious problem, please consult a plumber to prevent further damage from occurring.