Taking Care of your Water Supply

Tips on water hygiene

The water supplied to your home by the water company must meet the standards set in the Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2000. The standards are strict and the water company is monitored by the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) who carry out regular tests to ensure that the water quality meets the required standards. The areas cover:

- Bacteria
- Chemicals such as nitrates and pesticides
- Metals such as lead
- The way water looks and tastes

Things we do in the home can affect the water quality and even encourage bacteria growth. Read more about our hints and tips to help prevent bacteria growth and contamination of water supply.

Safe at 60°C

If you have a domestic hot water storage tank, a combination boiler or a multi-point water heater in your home the thermostat is set at 60°C. **Do not** reduce this setting as bacteria can multiply at lower temperatures.

If you are away from home for long periods (for example holidays or hospital stays) the water in your system can deteriorate if unused. When you return home heat up your system to the normal temperature and open each tap and run for at least 5 minutes.

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Tap Hygiene

Tap spouts on your bath basin and sink can become contaminated from external sources, so to be safe. Sterilize tap spouts by wiping with a dilute bleach solution, if the tap is heavily scaled or contaminated this can be dislodged using a nylon brush.

Fittings and Appliances

If you have a shower fitted with a flexible hose make sure that a hose retaining ring is fitted to prevent the shower head falling into your bath water. Don't use rubber push-on shower hoses on your bath taps, because if your water company have to turn off your water supply in an emergency the contents of your bath may be siphoned back into the mains causing contamination of the area. Clean your shower head regularly using a nylon brush then soak in a bleach solution.

If you have an outside tap fitted then the installation must comply with the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations and incorporate a Backflow Prevention Device, usually a double check valve.

Remember, any appliances you buy which are connected to the water supply must comply with the Water Regulations. All domestic appliances such as washing machines and dishwashers are manufactured to the appropriate standards but many commercial appliances do not and are not suitable for home use.

Water Filters

Both jug and fixed types must be cleaned and maintained in accordance with the manufacturers instructions.

Use Water Wisely

Lifestyle choices, population growth and climate change are placing increasing demands on water supplies; it is important that we do not take this precious resource for granted and that we all use water wisely.

Water Saving Tips

In the kitchen...

- Only fill the kettle with enough water for your needs.
- Use a plug in the sink or use a bowl to wash dishes.
- Rinse vegetables in a bowl rather than running water, you can save the water to water your plants.
- Only use your washing machine or dishwasher when you have a full load, alternatively if your machine has a half load button use this whenever you can.
- Hand washing woollen items does the job just as well as machine washing and saves several litres of water.
- Cooling water in the fridge means you don't have to run the tap for ages to get a drink of cold water.

In the bathroom...

- Use the plug in the washbasin whilst shaving rather then leaving the tap running.
- Turn off the tap while you brush your teeth and rinse your mouth with a glass of water.
- If you have a shower fitted, using this instead of taking a bath will use around one third of the water.
- The toilet is one of the largest users of water in the home, avoid flushing unnecessarily, and if you have a dual flush control don't forget to use it!

Outdoors...

- A water butt in your garden can collect rainwater that can be used on plants and lawns saving litres of water.
- Rather than washing your car with a hose pipe use a bucket and sponge and rinse with a watering can.

General...

- Did you know that a dripping tap can waste up to 140 litres of water a week? - Report any faults as soon as possible!
- Look out for water tank and toilet overflows running outside (the over flows on modern toilets run into the bowl rather than outside) - Report any problems as soon as possible!
- Know where your main stop tap is and make sure it works so that in case of a leak you can isolate the supply to prevent waste of water and damage to your property.

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