

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS THWAITES

Less down the drain

Simple plumbing fixes will save you water

It flows freely from our faucets, in our toilets and from our showerheads – we use water in almost every area of our lives, but just because it's readily accessible to us doesn't make it an unlimited resource.

"We, as Canadians, are the biggest per-capita users of water in the world," says Marc Benoit, owner of Plumbtech Plumbing. "Maybe it's because we have a fifth of the world's fresh water within our borders."

Whatever the case, Marc says there are many great reasons to cut down on our water consumption, and some practical ways to manage the flow so that less is lost down the drain.

"When we talk about saving water, most of us think we're doing it to save the environment," says Marc. "It's a good reason, but it's not the only one."

Cutting down on our water consumption also saves us money.

"It directly affects our water bills, no matter whether the water comes from a well, lake or municipality."

Conserving water takes a conscious decision but, with a few minor changes, Marc says it reaps major results without altering our current lifestyles.

A switch in the stream

"All it takes is a simple switch," says Marc. "Low-flow fixtures have been available for some time now, but there are newer ultra-low-flow options that are becoming increasingly available. They save a lot of water without compromising performance."

Toilets have always been among the biggest users of water in the home. "They use, on average, about 30 per cent of the average home's water consumption," says Marc. "That's second only to showers and baths."

To cut down on your toilet's water consumption, Marc suggests considering a dual-flush toilet that allows you to flush a smaller quantity of water for liquid waste, and a larger flush for solid.

Replacement fixtures can also cut your water use in the shower. "Older showerheads typically use about 2.5 gallons per minute, whereas the new water-efficient ones can use less than a gallon per minute."

Faucets, Marc says, have a similar effect to showerheads, reducing water usage by up to 50 per cent without sacrificing on quality.

"You can also add flow restrictors and aerators that

will have the same affect," says Marc.

Not only do these changes translate into big energy savings, Marc says they also dramatically lower the demands on your water heating system.

Municipal benefits

Many municipalities also offer rebates or incentives for homeowners who install water-efficient plumbing fixtures.

"Check with you municipality to see how they can help offset the cost of having approved high-efficiency devices installed," says Marc. "Then give us a call to see how we can help you get started." **DS**

BY SHELANNE JENNINGS

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