

WATER

ALL YOU NEED
TO KNOW

Wessex Water
YTL GROUP



FOR YOU. FOR LIFE.



CONTENTS

| | |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Here to help you | 1 |
| Water sources | 2 |
| Water environment | 2 |
| Water treatment | 3 |
| Our water network | 4 |
| Pipework responsibility | 5 |
| Water supply interruptions | 6 |
| Water pressure | 7 |
| Water quality | 8 |
| Water leakage | 9 |
| Water resources for the future | 10 |
| What you can do | 11 |
| Cold weather advice | 12 |
| Important information | 12 |
| How we can help | 13 |
| Contact us | |
| Back cover | |



HERE TO HELP YOU

We're one of the leading drinking water and sewerage companies in England and Wales and water is a precious resource for us.

So we're committed to providing you with the best quality drinking water and giving you the highest levels of customer service and environmental performance that we can.

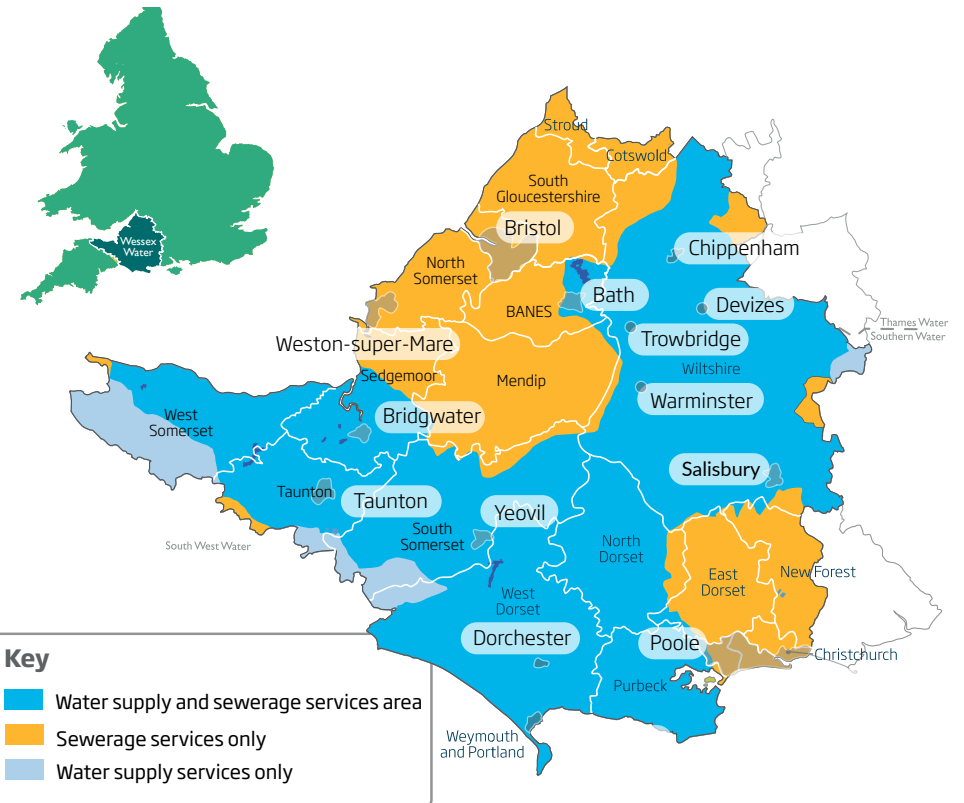
And we're determined to meet future demands for water without restrictions, without harming the environment and whatever extreme weather we face in the future.

We aim to do this by:

- encouraging and enabling our customers to use water wisely
- controlling leakage
- protecting our water sources from pollution, especially nitrates.

Although water is one of the world's natural resources and falls quite literally out of the sky, the job of collecting it and making it clean and safe to drink isn't a simple matter.

So we've put together this booklet to give you some idea of what goes into getting drinking water from its source to the taps in your home.



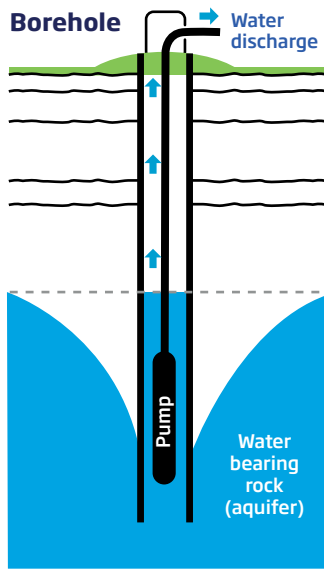
WATER SOURCES

Depending on where you live, your water supply may come from deep underground in Wiltshire and Dorset - around 80% of our water comes from there.

This underground water, in natural reservoirs called aquifers, originally fell as rain, snow or hail before seeping through rocks such as chalk, limestone and sandstone.

We mostly pump this water to the surface using boreholes which are sunk up to 120 metres into the rocks but some will rise naturally in springs. We then treat it and supply it your home.

Water from aquifers usually has fewer impurities so needs less treatment.



We simply inject it with a solution of chlorine gas to kill off any bacteria and in some cases aerate it to replace carbon dioxide with oxygen.

If your water doesn't come from these groundwater sources, it will come from our surface water reservoirs fed by streams and rivers. These are mostly located in hilly areas in Somerset.

Reservoir water needs a higher level of treatment than groundwater and we use a number of

different treatment processes to purify it to the high quality required by law. We take you through these processes on the page opposite.

WATER ENVIRONMENT

Abstraction licences granted by the Environment Agency make sure that our water supply operations don't harm the environment.

Our licences state the maximum amount of water we can take from the environment each day and each year, and in some cases link abstraction rates to water levels in local watercourses.

We operate 19 stream supports where we pump water from an underground aquifer and discharge it into a watercourse to keep flows in the streams at set levels through the year.

Doing this reduces the effect of our public water supply abstractions on local watercourses.

There are a further 20 sources where we reduce our abstraction rate for public supply when the river flow falls below a certain level, helping to reduce our impact on the environment.

We continue to work with the Environment Agency and Natural England to review where more could be done to protect the environment.

WATER TREATMENT

1 Filtration

The most common ways to treat water are coagulation, followed by dissolved air flotation, and/or sand filtration.

With both methods the water arriving at a treatment works flows through fine filters to remove algae, insects and any other objects.

2 Coagulation

A small amount of chemical coagulant is put into the water to help bind any impurities so that they stick together and can be trapped on the filters, which are cleaned regularly.

3 Dissolved air flotation

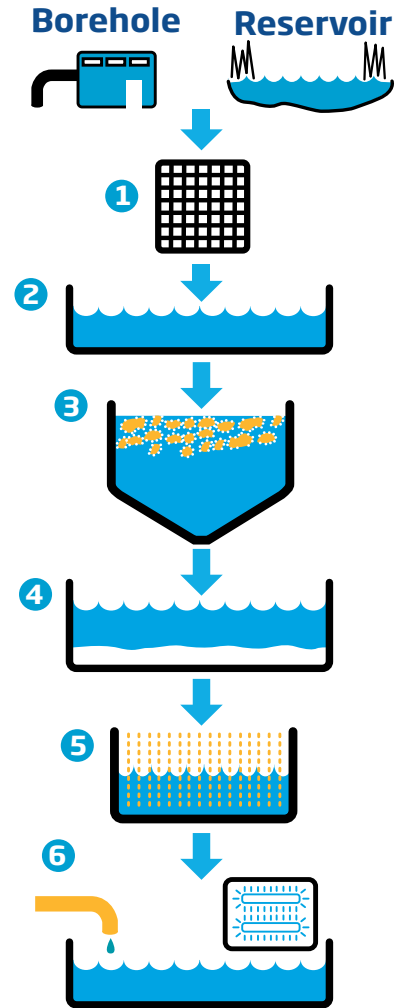
After coagulation water is fed into a chamber and air is forced through it, pushing the particles to the surface where they are removed.

4 Sand filtration

Water flows on to fine sand filter beds trapping any leftover particles. At some treatment works other filters, for instance carbon **5**, are used for further cleaning, and if necessary alkali such as lime is added to stabilise the water.

6 Disinfection

Finally, we treat the filtered water with ultraviolet and/or chlorine to kill any germs.



CHLORINE

We are legally required to disinfect water so we add a dose of chlorine during the treatment process to make sure it's safe to drink.

Most people don't notice a taste or smell of chlorine in water but if you are particularly sensitive you might notice it.

You can remove the taste safely by using a water filter - just make sure you follow the manufacturer's instructions on cleaning and maintenance.

Or you can chill tap water in the fridge to reduce the chlorine taste or smell. If you do this, or filter water, keep it covered in the fridge and remember to drink it soon as it won't stay fresh for long.

OUR WATER NETWORK

The water that comes out of your taps has travelled through our extensive network of water mains which covers much of the south west.

We move this water around to make sure you always have a supply and that we can meet demand across our region.

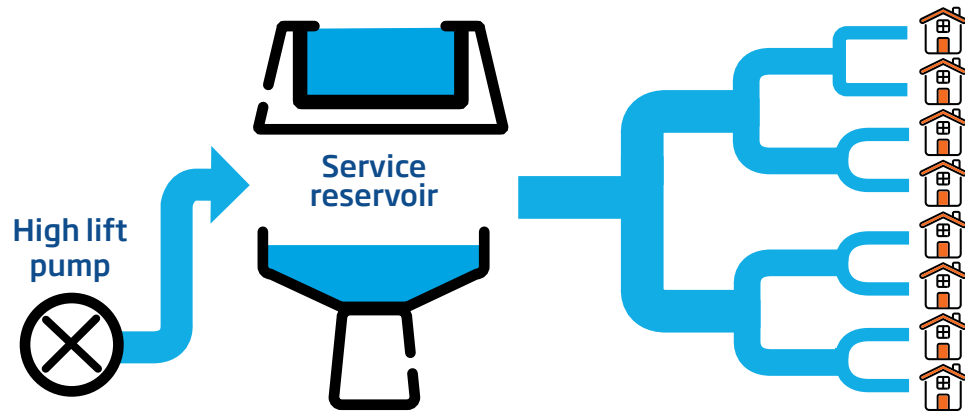
The treated water is held in storage tanks called service reservoirs which are usually hidden underground - or occasionally in water towers.

Water is usually pumped up to the reservoirs and then flows from service reservoirs to customers' homes by gravity, although sometimes it has to be pumped to make sure it reaches every property.

It leaves service reservoirs through trunk mains - large diameter pipes that carry substantial amounts of water around the area quickly.

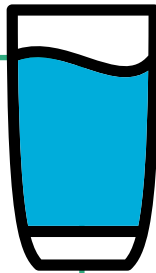
Most of our mains are between 300mm and 500mm in diameter, although some may be as big as 800mm.

From the trunk mains water flows into smaller pipes, called distribution mains, which become steadily smaller. Attached to these are service connections - these are the narrow pipes that carry water into individual homes.



FACT FILE

- We treat and supply **330 million** litres of water a day. That's enough water to fill **924** Olympic swimming pools every week!
- We supply **1.3 million** customers across the south west of England including Dorset, Somerset, and most of Wiltshire.



PIPEWORK RESPONSIBILITY

Our pipework

We're generally responsible for water mains and the pipes supplying your water between the main and the boundary of the street and your property. We continuously look for leaks, but if you spot one please let us know.




Your pipework

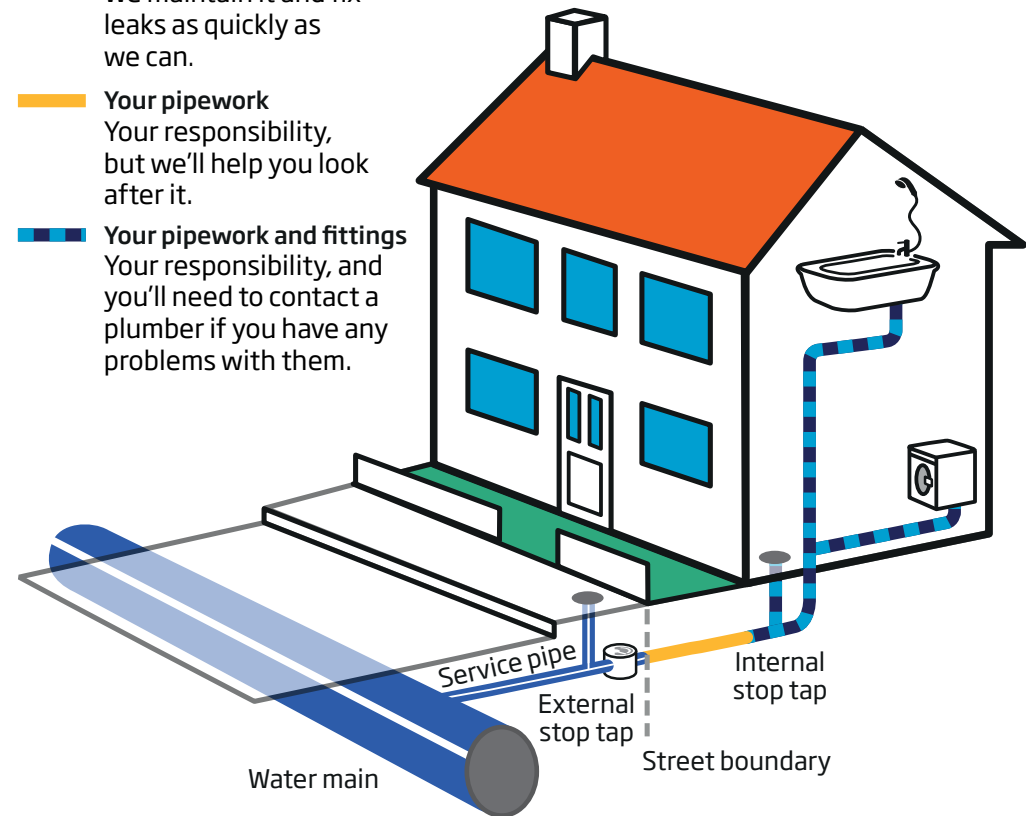
The pipework between our service pipe and your house (coloured yellow on the diagram below) is your private supply pipe. This is your responsibility even if

you do not own the land the pipe runs through.

The pipework and plumbing inside your home (marked 'Your pipework and fittings' on the diagram), including appliances, are also your responsibility.

We'll help you look after your private supply pipe up to the outside wall of your house but you'll have to contact a plumber, or your landlord, if you think you have a leak inside your house on your plumbing or appliances - unfortunately we can't do this for you.

-  **Our pipework**
We maintain it and fix leaks as quickly as we can.
-  **Your pipework**
Your responsibility, but we'll help you look after it.
-  **Your pipework and fittings**
Your responsibility, and you'll need to contact a plumber if you have any problems with them.



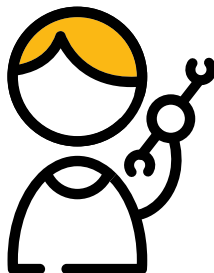
Shared pipework

Sometimes two or more properties share a service pipe, in which case they share joint ownership of the pipe.

If you share pipework, the responsibility for maintenance and leak repairs lies with all the pipe owners. We can usually repair leaks free of charge and this applies to shared supplies. For further

information see the Water leakage section on page 9.

If you don't know where your responsibility begins and ends then visit wessexwater.co.uk/pipework or call 0345 600 4 600 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm) and we'll be able to help you.



NEED A PLUMBER?

To find your nearest plumber visit the WaterSafe website at www.watersafe.org.uk or call 0333 207 9030 (Monday to Thursday, 8.30am to 5pm; Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm).

WATER SUPPLY INTERRUPTIONS

We are legally bound to provide enough water supply for customers' domestic needs.

But if for any reason we find the water is unfit to drink, we will send out advice immediately. For instance, we will tell you not to use it or to boil the water before using it for drinking and cooking.

And we will get this advice to you by putting a notice through your letterbox, via local media, a personal visit or by phone.

We'll compensate you if your water supply is interrupted because we have to put a drought order in place or if we fail to keep our promise about other supply interruptions.

For more information visit wessexwater.co.uk/promises or call 0345 600 4 600 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm).



EXTRA HELP

If you need additional support from us please let us know - we can help through Priority Services - see page 13

WATER PRESSURE

Water pressure is the force that pushes water through pipes and determines the flow of water from your tap.

The amount of pressure at your property can depend on:

- the height above your home of the service reservoir or water tower providing your supply. Properties at the top of a hill may receive lower pressure than those at the bottom of the hill
- how much water other customers are using
- how close you live to one of our pumps.

Pressure can also vary at different times of the day - it's affected by the number of customers using the water supply at the same time.

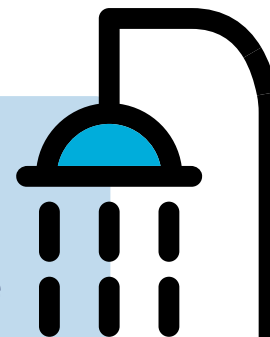
There is usually more demand on the water supply in the mornings and early evenings and this can result in low pressure.

The water pressure inside your property can also be affected by plumbing work, such as:

- changing the width or texture of a pipe
- using a different pump/regulator, or pump/regulator setting
- increasing or decreasing the level of water in an attic water tank.

We are legally bound to provide all customers with a minimum pressure of 10 metres head, and a flow rate of at least nine litres per minute at the boundary of your property, which should be ideal for day-to-day use.

We measure water pressure in 'bars' - one bar is the force needed to raise water through pipes to a height (or 'head') of 10 metres.



This should be powerful enough to fill a one-gallon (4.5 litre) container within 30 seconds.

If you experience low pressure for more than an hour on two occasions within a 28-day period, and it's our fault, you will automatically receive compensation.



FIND OUT MORE

If you are inconvenienced by abnormally high or low pressure we may be able to help.

For more information visit wessexwater.co.uk/promises

or call 0345 600 4 600 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm).

WATER QUALITY

We have a duty to ensure that our drinking water is wholesome, safe and compliant with the standards set down by law, mainly the Water Supply (water quality) Regulations.

So we monitor water quality continuously at our treatment works to make sure customers receive a wholesome supply. In the unlikely event of a problem at a site it is shut down automatically.

And each year we analyse around 50,000 samples of water from treatment works, reservoirs and customers' taps and carry out more than a million laboratory tests.

We are constantly investing in improvement work at service reservoirs and treatment works to maintain water quality and protect supplies.

Lead pipes

There are no lead water mains in use within our region. When drinking water leaves our treatment works it is free from lead.

However, there may be lead pipework from the water main into and within your home, particularly if it was built before 1970. Other pipes such as galvanised iron can also release lead into the water.

Therefore, on the journey to your tap, drinking water may pick up lead as the water comes into contact with these sources.

If you discover lead pipes in your home, we suggest you have them removed and replaced because they could have child health implications.

If you have concerns that your water may contain elevated levels of lead,

contact us via our online forms [wessexwater.co.uk/contactus](https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/contactus) or call us on 0345 600 4 600 and we will arrange to take a sample of the water from your kitchen tap and test it for you for free.

Find out more about checking for lead and what we are doing about it on our website [wessexwater.co.uk](https://www.wessexwater.co.uk) or call 0345 600 4 600 for a copy of our Water quality - lead in the water, the facts leaflet.

If you replace your private supply pipe we'll replace the communal pipe at the same time in full.

Rusted pipes

Iron pipes can rust, resulting in discoloured water or restricted flow. If this happens and it's because of our pipework, we will renew our part of the pipe and we recommend you replace the section for which you're responsible.

Water hardness

Around 80% of the water in our region comes from deep underground boreholes, and springs. This water is generally hard because it has filtered slowly through layers of soil and rock, dissolving calcium and magnesium salts on the way.

The rest of our water supply comes from surface water - mainly from reservoirs which store water that has run off the surrounding land. The hardness of this water depends on the type of soil and rock from which it's collected.

Hard water can cause scale in kettles or hot water systems but it is harmless.

Water softeners chemically remove the hardness from water and prevent scale forming in the domestic hot water system. If you have a water softener, make sure you follow the manufacturer's instructions and keep an unsoftened cold-water supply for drinking and cooking for health reasons.

If you need to know how hard your water is in order to set the softening control on your dishwasher, find out by visiting [wessexwater.co.uk/waterquality](https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/waterquality) or call 0345 600 4 600 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm).



If you have any questions about your water quality visit [wessexwater.co.uk/promises](https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/promises) or call 0345 600 4 600 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm).

There's more information about the range of trace substances naturally found in drinking water in our *Water quality - taste and odour the facts* leaflet. For a free copy call 0345 600 4 600 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm).

WATER LEAKAGE

A lot of our water distribution system was built long ago - in the 19th and early years of the 20th century - and many of our water mains are more than 50 years old. And this means they are more likely to suffer from leaks.

We invest millions of pounds each year to tackle leakage and have halved it since the mid-1990s.

We're committed to reducing leakage across our region and want to help you look after your water pipes and make it as easy as possible for you to find and fix leaks.

You may have a leak if you notice:

- areas of lush vegetation
- a big drop in water pressure
- a 'hissing' noise near your internal stop tap

- damp patches on the ground
- an unexplained increase in your bill.

We can normally fix a leak on your private supply pipe free of charge and will usually do this within 10 working days or sooner.

But sometimes we have to balance this kind of work with fixing larger leaks on mains in the road or helping customers with an emergency, such as having no water at all.

If we can't book an appointment with you for a while or have to wait for agreement from the landowner or for approval to use traffic lights, it could take longer than 10 days.

Please bear with us - we will get it done!



For more information visit [wessexwater.co.uk/leaks](https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/leaks) or call 0345 600 4 600 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm, emergencies only at other times).

If you spot a leak, report it online, [wessexwater.co.uk/leaks](https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/leaks) or call our free Leak stoppers line on 0800 692 0 692 (24 hours).

WATER RESOURCES FOR THE FUTURE

It's our aim to provide our customers with high quality, reliable and sustainable water services that give customers a good experience and value as well as protecting and improving the environment.

Every five years we prepare a water resources management plan in consultation with our regulators and stakeholders.

This plan sets out how, over the next 25 years, we will balance water supplies with water demands to ensure adequate water supply for our customers, while also protecting the environment.

We've reviewed our assessments of future water demand to take account of population growth, housing developments, changing patterns of household water use and business customers' changing requirements.

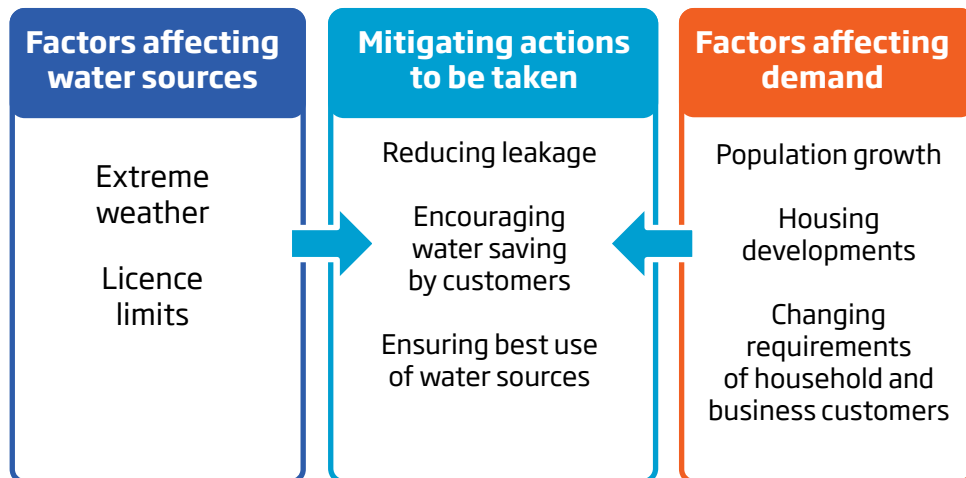
And we've also reviewed possible changes to supply from our water sources, such as the potential effects of extreme weather.

Our updated plan forecasts that, given the investments we have already made, we have access to enough water to meet the needs of our customers for at least the next 25 years without the need to develop new sources of water.

Nonetheless, we don't intend to stand still, and are taking forward ambitious proposals to:

- reduce leakage by 15% by 2025
- work with our customers to support reductions in their use of water through metering and water efficiency programmes
- work with other water companies and the Environment Agency in the West Country region to ensure the best use of water resources.

By working together we will take less from the environment, improve the resilience of our services, and potentially support areas of the country where water stress is a growing problem.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Saving water

Making small changes to how you use water in your home can help reduce your water use, save you money and help your local environment.

Try using these three easy tips to help you save water where you use it most - the bathroom.

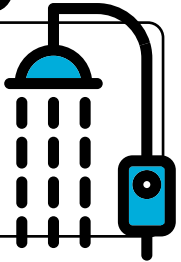
BRUSHING TEETH

Do you leave the tap running when brushing your teeth, washing or shaving? Turning it off could save you up to **18 litres** a day.



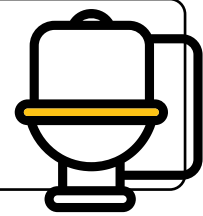
SHOWERING

How long do you spend in the shower? Try taking the four-minute shower challenge. Every minute less you spend in the shower could save you **10 litres**.



USING THE TOILET

Could you flush the toilet once a day less than you currently do? Each flush uses an average of **seven litres** of water.



Following these simple tips could save you up to **13,000 litres** of water a year. You could make even further savings by fixing leaking taps, showers and toilets, which can waste more than **200 litres** of water a day!



For more advice and to order FREE water saving devices for your home, visit our website wessexwater.co.uk/savingwater



COLD WEATHER ADVICE

Prepare your pipes for winter

It's important to protect your home from cold weather to beat the freeze.

Before winter starts to bite, you should:

- **find** your internal stop tap and check it's working
- **protect** pipes in cold areas by covering them with lagging
- **cover** your outside tap to protect it from the cold
- **get** your boiler serviced
- **keep** your heating on low if you go away.

Don't forget to have the number of a qualified plumber handy in case of an emergency - WaterSafe is an online directory of approved plumbers. See www.watersafe.org.uk



For further information visit wessexwater.co.uk/winter

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Electrical earthing

For homes built before 1966, it used to be common practice for the incoming customer supply pipe to be used for electrical earthing. The new water pipes we install are plastic and don't provide an electrical earth.

If you suspect your property may be earthed using a metal water supply pipe, it's important you contact a qualified electrician for advice.

Records

Water companies in England and Wales hold maps that show the approximate position of water mains.

You have the right to see these records and can arrange to see them by calling 01225 528262 (Monday to Thursday, 8.30am to 4.30pm, Friday, 8.30am to 4pm).

Preventing contamination and powers of entry

Water companies are responsible for enforcing regulations that protect the quality of the water supply.

These regulations prevent contamination, waste and misuse of water and we have statutory rights to enter premises or land to investigate compliance with the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999.

We also have powers of entry for monitoring wholesomeness of water supply and this may involve taking water samples or carrying out surveys.

We'll always call at a reasonable time and give you prior notice, except when we are dealing with emergency incidents. If we fail to provide the appropriate notice you have the right to refuse entry.

To request a free leaflet about the regulations call 0345 600 4 600 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm).

HOW WE CAN HELP

Extra support when you need it

PRIORITY SERVICES

Extra support when you need it

We want to give all our customers the best service at all times. We know that everyone's needs are different and we can help through Priority Services.

When you sign up for Priority Services you can:

- ensure you always have easy access to water
- choose how you receive your bill and information
- ask for help with reading your meter
- set up a password for when we visit.

Priority Services is a free service and anyone living in the Wessex Water region can sign up for it.

Spread the word - tell your family and friends about our service if you think it will help them.

Apply online today

Visit wessexwater.co.uk/priorityservices or

Call 0345 600 3 600 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm; Saturday, 8am to 2pm).

Energy providers offer a similar service - don't forget to register with them too.



We've had reports that customers have been phoned by people claiming to be from a debt agency and asking for an outstanding bill to be settled by credit card, even though the customer concerned has already paid their bill.

If you receive a call like this, call us on 0345 600 3 600 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm; Saturday, 8am to 2pm) to check whether the call was genuine.

CONTACT US

Questions about your water supply or sewerage

- Loss of supply • Leak • Water quality problem • Sewage flooding
- Blocked sewer

0345 600 4 600

(Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm, emergencies only at other times)

Submit an online enquiry via our website: [wessexwater.co.uk/contactus](https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/contactus)

Bournemouth Water customers with enquiries about their water supply, billing or metering should call 01202 590 059.

Automated billing telephone services

0345 600 6 600 when connected PRESS:

- 1 Meter option leaflet
- 2 Surface water drainage leaflet
- 3 Charges explained leaflet
- 4 Submit meter reading after an estimated bill
- 5 Information on rateable value charging
- 6 Pension Credit discount leaflet

Questions about your bill

- Payment arrangements • Metering • Moving house • Problems paying
- High water use • Priority Services

0345 600 3 600 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm; Saturday, 8am to 2pm)

Submit an online enquiry via our website: [wessexwater.co.uk/contactus](https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/contactus)

Write to: Wessex Water, 1 Clevedon Walk, Nailsea, Bristol BS48 1WA
[wessexwater.co.uk](https://www.wessexwater.co.uk)

This leaflet forms part of our core customer information, covering key aspects of our work including leakage, enquiries and complaints. All these leaflets can be found at [wessexwater.co.uk/policy](https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/policy)
We welcome calls via the Next Generation Text service.

Calls to 0345 numbers from UK landlines cost no more than calls to standard UK landline numbers. If you're calling from a mobile please check with your service provider as sometimes calls can cost more. We may record telephone calls into our contact centres for quality, security and training purposes.