

Water Fact Sheet

"We never know the worth of water till the well is dry." - Thomas Fuller, Gnomologia, 1732

Liquid gold

* **Fresh water is the most precious resource on Earth.** It is the essential ingredient for life on Earth. We use it in almost everything we do. We depend on it for drinking, eating, energy and transport. We have become so used to its seeming abundance that, like a loving mum, we have come to take it for granted.



* Although water covers three quarters of our Earth's surface, the freshwater that so much of life depends upon only makes up 1% of this water – just a tiny sliver scattered on this earth to support us all. You'd think we'd be pretty careful with something so precious yet so scarce. So are we? Well...

Did you know?

* About **400 billion gallons of water** is used everyday on Earth. (1)

* **Most of the world's usable freshwater is groundwater.**

* **Australian households are terrible at conserving water.** Consider for a moment the recent global study by international water experts Hoekstra and Chapagain. (2) They found that Australian households held the worst record for water consumption. On average, each Australian uses 341,000 litres of water each year – that's around 8 backyard swimming pools. **We are the most carefree water users on the planet, and we live on the driest continent on the planet!** The closest to us is Canada in distant second with 279,000 litres per year. The Americans use 217,000 litres per person, the Chinese 26,000 and Bangladesh just 16,000 litres (half a backyard pool). The world average is 57,000 litres.

* In the cities of many developed countries, **drinking-quality water is used to flush toilets** and to water gardens. Only around 1% is used for actual drinking. (3)

* **About 20% of the world's population** does not have access to safe drinking water. (4)

* **Bottled water** can be up to 1000 times more expensive than tap water and it may not be as safe. (5)

* **If present consumption patterns continue,** 2 out of every 3 people will live in water-stressed conditions by the year 2025. (6)

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* **It takes 7,007 litres of water** to refine one barrel of crude oil. (7)

* **The overall amount of water on our planet** has remained the same for 2 billion years. (8)

* **Freshwater animals** are disappearing five times faster than land animals. (9)

* **Approximately 25,700 litres of water** is required to grow a day's food for a family of four. (10)

* **Spending 3 minutes less a day** under the average shower will save 13,140 litres of water a year. (11)

* **A cow can drink as much as 90 litres of water per day** while only producing a measly 12 litres of milk. (12)

* **Most of don't spare a thought for the amount of water hidden in the food that we eat.** Have a look at how much water it takes to produce some of our favourite foods :

An apple = 70 litres

A glass of wine = 120 litres

Slice of bread = 40 litres

Cup of coffee = 140 litres

An egg = 135 litres

Hamburger = 2400 litres

Leather shoes = 8000 litres

A glass of beer = 75 litres

Bag of chips = 185 litres

Cup of tea = 35 litres

A potato = 25 litres

Glass of milk = 200 litres

Cotton t-shirt = 2000 litres

One kg of beef = 16000 litres



Visit www.coolaustralia.org for more information on water.

Other useful water resources:



Bottled water Alliance: www.bottledwateralliance.com.au

Water Footprint Network: www.waterfootprint.org

The Australian Marine Conservation Society: www.amcs.org.au

savewater!: www.savewater.com.au

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What can you do?

* **Use water tanks** to catch rainfall. Currently most of rain just gets washed down the drain.

* Make sure you've got a **full load of laundry** before you hit the 'start' button on the washing machine. Likewise the dishwasher.

* **Fix any dripping taps or leaky toilets.** A leaking tap can waste as much as 20,000 litres of water a year. Enough said.



* Encourage your friends and neighbours to be part of a **water-conscious community.** Promote water conservation in community newsletters, on bulletin boards and by example. Encourage your friends, neighbours and co-workers to "do their part."

* Whether you use the simple 'bucket' method to **collect greywater**, or have a complete greywater system installed, reusing this valuable resource can greatly reduce your water use.

* **Buy efficient appliances.** New appliances such as washing machines and dishwashers have water ratings labels on them that tell you how much water they use.

* **If it's yellow let it mellow, if it's brown flush it down** - with a half flush.

* While we're being short but sweet, **take shorter showers.** And turn off the tap while your brushing your teeth. We know you know, but you'd be amazed...

* **Insulate hot water pipes.** This avoids wasting water while waiting for hot water to flow through and saves energy.

* **Older style toilets use around 18 litres of water per flush!** The latest ultra-low-flush toilets can use as little as 4.5 litres for a full flush and 3 litres for a half flush.

* **Keep a container of water in the fridge** so that you won't need to run the water down the sink until it's cool enough to drink.

* **Washing fruit and vegies in a half-filled sink** instead of under running water is a great way to cut back on water wastage.

* Try to use **phosphate-free, eco-friendly detergents and cleaning products** - there's a great range to choose from these days and they're much better for our environment.



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