

Household Water Leaks-How to Detect and What to Do

Evidence of Water Leaks

Discoloration or swelling in the wall, floor, or ceiling in the presence or absence of water dripping is the easiest visual indication of a water leak. Another visual sign is mould growth. Mould growth can occur when water from a leak comes in contact with drywall or carpet and establish within 24 to 48 hours after contact. Detection of mould can be from seeing the mould, the smell, or family members becoming sick or exhibiting increased allergy symptoms. If you can hear water or hissing sounds coming from the pipes when no water is being used, you probably have a leak. If your toilet is constantly running, or the handle is sticking, there may be a broken component causing a water leak that needs to be fixed or changed. Lower water pressure, or higher than normal water bills can also be common signs of leakage.

Common Causes

Pipes can wear down overtime, causing water leaks that must be fixed by replacing either rubber valves or pipe sections. Tree roots can grow into an underground water pipe and break it. Similarly, animals can dig or burrow into pipes and cause damage. Weather fluctuation, especially icy conditions, may also cause some cracking. Toilets leaks are usually a malfunction of a small working component (such as the chain) that can be replaced without much time or money.

Water Monitor Test

If you have a water monitor for your house, finding out if you have a leak should be easy. When conducting the water meter test ensure no water is being used inside or outside of your house. In the first method, go to the water meter and see if the leak detector is moving; if it is you likely have a water leak. To determine the approximate location, turn your main valve for inside the house off. If the leak detector is still moving, the leak is outside the house, if it is not moving, the leak is inside. To double check, you can turn on the inside valve and turn off the outdoor one. If the leak indicator is moving when the outside water is off, the leak is inside. The other water monitor test method is to take a water reading when no water is being used, then wait approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour and take another reading. If no water was being used and the water meter readings are different, you have a water leak.

Stethoscope Test

At home you can check for water leaks in your pipes using vibrations created by water flow. In this test, you must first ensure that the fittings of your pipes are tightened. Then, using a metal screwdriver or something similar, place one end on the hose part of the pipe and the other end on your head just in

front of your ear; if water is flowing, the water will create a vibration that you will feel through the metal screwdriver or rod. If you do feel vibrations using the stethoscope test, you have a leak. Finding the exact location may be difficult, however you may be able to find the general area water is flowing.

Dye Test

The dye test is a test to determine whether or not your toilet is leaking. First you need to remove the lid from the back of the toilet tank. Add a few drops of food coloring or a dye tablet into the water tank and put the lid back on. After about 30 minutes to 1 hour without flushing that toilet, go look in the toilet bowl. If the toilet bowl has color from the dye or food coloring, your toilet is leaking; if there is no color change the toilet is not leaking. After you determine if one toilet is leaking or not, move on to any others with the same procedure.

What to do after Locating a Leak

Immediately after you find a leak in your house you should call to get a professional to come fix the issue. If you can determine the approximate or exact location of the leak using the above methods, it may save you more money when you hire someone to fix the issue. Ignoring a water leak can waste millions of gallons of water and cost a lot of money in water bills and repairs if the leak worsens. If mould was found in your house first fix the leak, then dry the area, remove any non-salvageable areas, then disinfect all areas that may have been touched by water.