Wellington Water

Showers, power bills & water

Could you save $$$?

Water-flow from showerheads can range from about 6 litres per minute up to 24+ litres per minute. We all like a nice, strong-feeling shower, but a higher flow rate doesn't always mean "better".

"Consumer" magazine tested water-efficient mains-pressure shower heads for their "feel good" factor. They found that you can have a great shower and save hundreds of dollars each year on your hot water energy bill, by switching to a more efficient shower head (we've included a link to their findings below). A typical household's energy bill is about one third hot water – if your shower is spraying more than 9 litres of water per minute, it's like pouring money down the drain.

Check your shower's flow rate

It's easy. Simply find a bucket or other open-topped container of 3-plus litre capacity, with volume markings down the side. Alternatively, you can use an unmarked container and a measuring jug with ml/litre markings.

1. Turn the shower on at your normal temperature and flow
2. Place your container under the showerhead to catch all the flow, and time 15 seconds
3. Carefully check the amount of water in your bucket or container, using the volume markings on its side (or with a measuring jug), to identify the shower's flow volume for 15 seconds
4. Multiply the 15-second volume by four, to give a "per-minute" flow rate

See your power and water saving

The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA) has developed a calculator that lets you estimate the savings you could make, based on your own circumstances.

You can download the calculator via the following web page[1] (see Resources & Links, Shower head calculator).

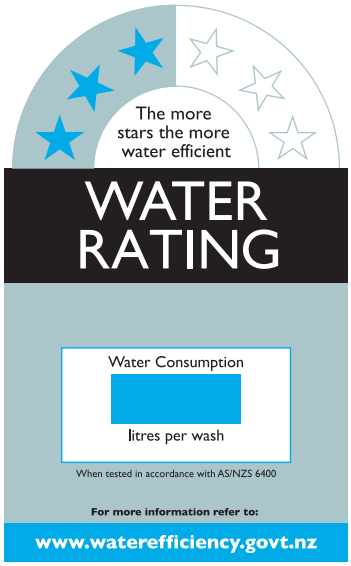
www.upperhuttcity.com/water/water-conservation/how-much-is-your-shower-costing-you/

A family with teenagers found it could save over $500 per year, just by changing the shower head

If you have a large family, or your teenager likes to take long showers, it really adds up.

1 The shower-head calculator uses data provided by EECA. Upper Hutt City Council and Wellington Water do not guarantee the accuracy of results from use of the shower-head calculator.

How can I be sure I'm buying a water-efficient showerhead?



The New Zealand Water Efficiency Labelling Scheme (WELS) provides information, through labelling at the point of sale, to consumers buying new products that use water, including showerheads. Compare water-efficiency "star" rating stickers on showerheads when buying. The more WELS blue stars shown on the label, the more water-efficient (and energy-efficient) it is.

Consumer's "feel-good" water-efficient showers test

Consumer New Zealand had eight people test seven water-efficient showerheads for the best combination of comfort (felt good) and effectiveness (got them clean) without heating up the power bill. Their trials found three water-efficient showerheads "that came close to the perfect combination of comfort and effectiveness". You can check out their report[2] at the following web page:
www.consumer.org.nz/products/shower-heads/overview

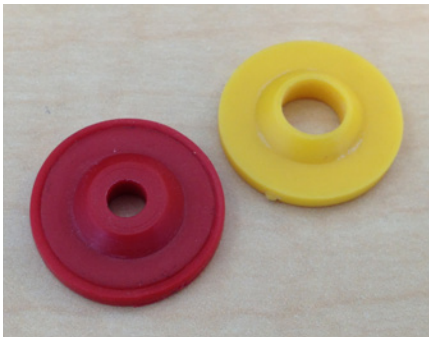
Of course, Consumer's "feel-good" testing doesn't cover all water-efficient showerheads and there are probably others that perform well too. Some plumbing suppliers have working showerhead demonstrations in their showrooms, so it may pay to ring around if you want to feel how a particular model performs before you buy.

Reduce the flow without replacing your shower

If you don't want the expense of changing your mains-pressure showerhead, but want to save on heating costs and water use, there are a couple of other options:

Flow-saver discs

You may be able to fit a flow-saver disc to your existing shower – these reduce the flow to a specified rate, usually 9 litres per minute, but other options are available.



These shower flow-saver discs give a choice of flow: 9 litres per minute (yellow) or 7 litres per minute (red)

You can get them from plumbing suppliers for a few dollars; they're easy to fit and may save you hundreds of dollars a year. You can use the EECA calculator to estimate your personal savings from fitting a flow-saver disc.

For advice about whether a flow-saver is right for your shower, check your shower's current flow rate then talk to the staff at your nearest bathroom centre or plumbing supplies outlet.

Shorter showers

Taking shorter showers also saves on power costs and water. Shaving a minute from your showering times will save a household of four people about $100 per year[3]. You can use the EECA calculator to estimate your personal savings from shorter showers too.

Saving water

Showers typically account for between a quarter and a third of household water use.

Switching to a more efficient showerhead saves water as well as power – reducing shower flow by just 4 litres per minute could save over 60 litres a day for an average household[4], without sacrificing showering comfort.

While it might seem like there is plenty of water around, catching and treating water is an expensive exercise. The less water we use as a city, the less we get billed. This frees up funds for other uses and helps Council to curb rates increases.

2 N.B. Wellington Water does not endorse any particular brands of showerhead.

3 Assumes a flow rate of 12 litres per minute and electricity costs of $0.22/kWh

4 Based on the average number of showers per day and the average shower duration during Feb-Mar, Auckland Water Use Study, BRANZ and Watercare Services Ltd (Project EC1356), October 2008

For more information contact: Private Bag 39804
Mail Centre 5045
Wellington
04 912 4400
wellingtonwater.co.nz

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