

Fact sheet

June 2006

Water is vital for all life on this planet. It is a precious resource that is essential for the environment and the health of us all. To reach our taps water has to be taken from the natural environment, highly treated, delivered to the places where we want to use it and cleaned again afterwards.

How much new water is being made each day?

The water on earth today is the same water that has always been here.

The same water used by the dinosaurs, the cavemen, the romans, medieval knights, victorians and our grandparents.

Water is constantly being recycled, in the watercycle there is no new water.

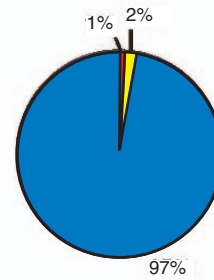
How much water is drinkable?

70% of the planet is water, however 97% of all the water on earth is seawater, which we can't drink as it is salty.

Only 3% of all the water on the planet is fresh and drinkable.

But of that 3%, the majority is locked in the polar ice caps and glaciers so that the actual amount of fresh drinkable water available on earth is about 1%.

That is all the water that is available for every human, land animal and plant to share.



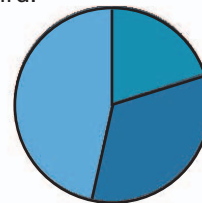
- Oceans and seas
- Available fresh water
- Water locked in the polar ice caps

Is water important?

Water is vital for all life. You could survive for a month or so without food but less than a week without water. Water is the most natural, healthy thing we can drink, our bodies are 70% water and our brains are 78% water, so it is important to drink water to keep our minds and bodies active.

How much water do we use?

Every one of us uses about 150 litres of water a day and our water use is steadily increasing. That is almost two baths full or 16 buckets of water. Baths and showers account for around one fifth of the water used in our home – and the loo uses one third.



- 1/5th baths and showers
- 1/3rd loo
- All the rest e.g. drinking, cooking, washing machine, dishwater, hosepipes



Water is precious

Why do we use so much water?

We take water for granted as we have taps to get it straight into our homes and toilets and drains to take it away again after we have used it.

Over the last 300 years demand for water has increased more than five times as fast as the world's population has grown. A household in Britain today uses 70% more water than it did only 30 years ago, mainly because we now have more labour saving appliances, which use lots of water such as dishwashers and washing machines.

Do we waste water?

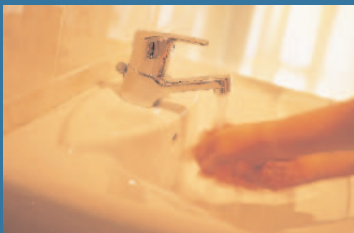
We waste water all the time.

- If we leave the tap running when we brush our teeth we waste 10 litres a minute. Enough to fill a bucket!
- We waste water by letting the tap run while we are waiting for the hot water to come through.
- We waste water when we leave taps running or dripping.
- We waste water when we wash things under a running tap.
- We waste water when we water our gardens using a sprinkler or when it is sunny.

And in lots more ways.

If water is constantly being recycled why do we need to save water?

We all take water for granted in this country and give little thought to the precious



resource that keeps us alive, as we flush the loo or brush our teeth.

The raw material may appear to be plentiful, but world wide and even in parts of the UK, it is an increasingly scarce resource. We tend to think of Britain as a wet country but in the past few years the annual rainfall in parts of England has fallen to levels similar to Somalia or Malawi! We are dependent on the weather and moisture-laden air moving in from the Atlantic providing us with vast quantities of rain and topping up our supply.

One of the possible effects of global warming is to shift this process further north, to give us a more Mediterranean type of climate and drier warmer conditions with the risk that our fresh water supply could be seriously depleted. We are already seeing the effects of reduced rainfall in the south of the country.

The more water we use, the more natural resources, chemicals and energy are used to treat and deliver it to us, and to treat it once we have finished with it to make it safe to return to the environment. The water industry is one of the largest energy users in the UK – mainly for pumping water around the distribution system when we can't use gravity and in the treatment process. Wasting hot water at home, school or work also wastes the energy that is used to heat it.

What can we do?

Think about how you use water and the ways we waste it in our homes and schools.

Do your bit

- Turn the tap off when you brush your teeth.
- Have a shower instead of a bath.



- Put a save a flush in the toilet cistern.
- Only wash the dishes when you have a bowl full.
- Get a water butt to water the garden.
- Only put the washing machine or dishwasher on when you have a full load.

The benefits of water conservation.

If you are on a meter your water bill will be reduced as you will be using less water. There are also direct environmental benefits such as energy and chemicals saved, reduced water treatment and less pollution leading to global warming. Expensive new water abstraction or reservoirs can be avoided or delayed and rivers and wetlands can be improved protecting habitats and biodiversity.

In one day, each of us can flush away more water than some people in the developing world would get in a week. If we use the toilet to dispose of anything that doesn't come out of us naturally or toilet roll i.e. if we use the toilet instead of a bin, then we waste even more. Not only do we waste up to 9 litres every single time we throw something in the toilet and flush, we also increase the amount of energy and fossil fuels that are used to clean the water afterwards.

**Water is precious,
use it,
don't waste it.**



**NORTHUMBRIAN
WATER**