

Common Questions:

- **Can I increase the water pressure in my bathroom faucet?**
First, check the emergency shutoff under your sink to make sure it's fully open. If rubber washers or seals have begun to deteriorate, you'll lose water volume (which affects pressure), so check those. Calcium and lime buildup will also cause low water volume (which affects pressure). You should also check to make sure the aerators (strainers) on the end of the faucet spout is clean, if corroded replace it.
- **What should I do to take care of my faucets and sinks?**
Even small drips can waste thousands of gallons of water, as much as 150 gallons a day! Be sure to check under sinks for moisture or small leaks. And always repair leaky faucets right away to avoid paying for wasted water, and also to avoid water damage to your fixtures, pipes and cause mold to form. Remove and clean your faucet aerators annually, to ensure an even flow of water. Make sure overflow holes on tubs and vanities are clear and open to prevent water damage to floors and ceilings if that fixtures was to be overfilled.
- **Can I replace my two-handled faucet with a single-handle faucet?**
Usually, faucet dimensions and sink openings are standard throughout the plumbing industry, so the answer is usually yes. There are a few exceptions, so check the size of the sink opening before you buy new fixtures. A standard "Center Set" will be 4 inches from center of hot handle to center of the cold handle. A "Wide Spread" faucet can be 8 to 12 inches from center of one handle to the other handle.
- **How can I prevent clogged drains?**
Do not rinse fats or cooking oils down the kitchen sink with hot water. Liquid fats solidify in the cold pipes and create clogs. If you must rinse then use cold water to keep the fats in a solid state. To help prevent clogs, fit all your tubs and shower drains with a strainer that catches hair and soap chips, and clean the strainer regularly.
- **What causes my kitchen sink and washing machine drains to clog?**
In most homes, the kitchen and laundry drains are connected. When the lint from the laundry drains meets the grease buildup from soap and food products, a nearly solid substance is formed, causing blockage. Using filters and strainers will help, but you'll also need to get the drains snaked periodically as well.
- **Should I close and open the main water supply shutoff valve periodically?**
Yes. You want to make sure they're not stuck in the open position just when you have a water emergency! Do the same periodic check for the emergency shutoff valves in the cabinets under your sinks (check the aerators flow when finished to make sure you didn't break loose some debris, if so remove and clean), check water heater and toilets, too.
- **Why do I hear a vibrating noise in my pipes?**
Noises can be fairly common in plumbing supply lines. If a washer in a faucet or valve is loose, you'll hear it rattling, knocking, or vibrating. If the sound occurs when you open and close faucets rapidly, this is called "water hammering", it generally means pipes are loose, and can be corrected by anchoring pipes more

securely. If that doesn't work and it really bothers you, you can add air chambers at the end of long pipe runs or at the emergency shut off area at each fixture that is hammering. Their installation will probably require a plumbing professional.

- **What can I do about a sewer line blockage?**

The main culprit is tree roots, and once they've blocked the line, there is very little you can do. A plumbing professional can snake the line to get it as clear as possible, and then use copper sulfide products to kill the remaining vegetation. But odds are the sewer line or joint will most likely need to be replaced since the roots keep growing and will either crush or break your sewer line.

- **Are caustic liquid drain openers (like Drano or Liquid Plumber) harmful to pipes?**

For minor clogs, they're fine, but never use them on a drain that is completely clogged. The caustic ingredients are trapped in your pipes, and it can severely damage them. If you can't snake the drain yourself, contact a professional to do so. Never use caustic drain openers in a drain that has a garbage disposal.

- **Why doesn't my old water heater work as well as it used to?**

This is usually due to a sediment buildup in your tank. As water heaters grow older, they accumulate sediment and lime deposits that settle to the bottom. If these deposits are not removed periodically, the sediment will create a barrier between the burner and the water, greatly reducing the water heater's performance level. It will also start to diminish the gallons of storage capacity. At least once every three months, drain water from the tank. Draining a gallon or so on a regular basis helps remove the sediment.

You should also periodically inspect your water heater burner. The flame under the heater should appear blue with yellow tips. If it's mostly yellow, or if it's sooty under there, your flue may be clogged or the burners are dirty, which is a dangerous situation.

Contact a professional to check it out. At least once every two years, have your water heater inspected by a service technician. He or she will also check the drain valve for signs of leakage.

- **What's the best way to extend the life of my garbage disposal?**

Always use plenty of cold water (NOT HOT) when running your disposal, and avoid overloading it. Never dispose of very hard items like bones or corn husks. Never dispose of potato skins, artichoke leaves, and stringy type food or coffee grounds. And never use a caustic drain opener. You can extend the life of your hands by never using them to remove items dropped inside – use tongs instead! If your disposal begins to have a foul odor try dumping a cup or two of ice cubes into it and grind them up with no water running. This helps knock off food particles that have built up on the sides and grinding surface of the disposal.

- **What should I do if my garbage disposal stops working?**

Before calling a professional, be sure to try the reset switch located on the bottom of most disposals (usually it is in the center). If your disposal just hums that is an indication that it is jammed and the blades must be freed before it will grind.

- **What's the best way to check for toilet leaks?**

Toilet leaks can be wasteful and expensive. At least once a year, check your toilet for leaks by adding a small amount of red food coloring to the tank, and then

check the toilet bowl later. If the toilet bowl water is colored red, water is seeping through from the tank. If it is leaking, you should replace the flush valve or flapper.