

Fixing water related problems

Blockages

Blocked sink, water not emptying:

First, try a plunger to clear the blockage. If this doesn't work, it may mean that the pipe below the sink is blocked. Put the plug into the plug hole and place a bucket under the pipe. Unscrew it carefully; ensuring the bucket is positioned below to catch any water. Rinse the pipe out thoroughly, removing anything that may be blocking it. If it seems clear, then the blockage may be in the waste pipe, use a piece of stiff wire to poke it clear.

Fix the pipe back below the sink let the water run away. Pour boiling water down and washing up liquid down the plug to ensure that it is fully clear.

Bath filling with water whilst showering:

This probably means your waste pipe is blocked with hair and scum. If the hair is visible in the plug, then remove it to clear the plug hole. If it is not, then you will need to use something to put down the plug to pull the hair out. A piece of wire should do the trick. Make a hook with the wire and fish any blocked hair out. For future use, you should use a drop in hair trap to sit over the plug hole and collect any loose hair. These are cheap to buy and if you empty it after every shower then you should prevent any future blockages.

Blocked Drain:

Do not empty any more water into the drains.

Check the manhole outside your property. It may be heavy to lift so take care. If it is clear then the blockage must be between your property and here. If it is full, then the blockage is further along, so check the next manhole. If it is a private drain or sewer then it is the householder's responsibility to clear it but if your house is in a row of houses then the problem could be shared with several householders who add waste up to the point of the blockage.

Once located, first get your hose and poke it into the end of the drain from the empty manhole and turn the water on full to see if the water pressure will shift the blockage. If this doesn't work then try to push the hose down the drain from the full manhole. Make sure you feed the hose down well before switching on the water so that the content doesn't get sprayed back at you.

If the DIY hose method does not work, then you can use a set of drain rods, which you can hire from a DIY shop. These can be screwed together and pushed through the drain to clear any blockage. Make sure you turn the rods in a clockwise direction as you push them, this will stop them loosening or a joint undoing whilst underground. Once the blockage is cleared it is worth flushing the drains through, perhaps with hot soapy water as often, fat can block drains and this will help break it up and disperse it completely.

If you are unable to clear the drains yourself, then you should hire drain clearers. You will find them listed in the yellow pages.

You can help keep your drainage system and the environment clean by disposing of your waste oil, fat and grease, simply and safely in **the Fat Trap**. This product provides a consumer friendly alternative to pouring such waste down the sink. The Fat Trap holds 500ml, sits neatly beside the cooker and will take the waste fat, grease and oil from every day cooking, frying and roasting.

Alternatively you can make a bird ball by adding seeds to your cooking fat or the council now provides a service of collecting your cooking oil which they will recycle and use as fuel called bio-diesel.

Blocked Toilet

If your toilet is blocked with paper and is not flushing it away properly, then it should usually be able to be cleared with a large rubber plunger.

Fit the plunger over the outlet at the bottom of the toilet pan and thrust it down a few times. This should clear the blockage. Once cleared, flush the soil pipe through with a bucket of water. If you are unable to clear the blockage yourself, then call out a plumber.

Dripping Taps

A dripping tap can be an annoyance as well as a waste of water, a waste of energy if it is a hot tap, and can leave nasty stains on your bath or sink. It is also easier to fix than you might think, often just a replacement washer is needed, and by doing it yourself, you could save on expensive plumbing costs.

You'll need a spanner, a flathead and crosshead screwdriver, a cloth and some wire wool, washers.

There are a few different types of taps:

- Taps that turn on and off with a quarter of a turn - ceramic discs inside a replaceable cartridge.
- Taps that take several turns - rubber sealing washers, different sizes depending on whether they are basin or bath taps.
- Mixer taps - often small washers.

As different taps will have different size washers, it is worth checking which one you need first and taking the old one in as an example or buying a selection so that you are sure you will have the correct size.

You will need to turn off the water supply to the tap, this will either be by turning the supply off completely - usually under or near the kitchen sink - or if the supply pipe to the tap has an isolating valve, you can turn the water off here by turning the valve ball with a screwdriver. Once done, you should open the tap up fully to check the water is off. A trickle of water may come out but that should be all.

Take off the screw handle. Depending on what type of tap it is you can either just:

- Pull it off.
- Unscrew the screw from under the hot or cold indicator disc and then pull it off.
- Undo the small screw set in its underside - if an old style tap.

Once the handle is removed, you should now see the stem of the tap with a brass nut holding it in place. Unscrew this by turning it anti clockwise with a spanner, then lift out the tap stem.

The washer is on the bottom of this piece, you need to prise it off and clean any corrosion or scale off the stem with wire wool and a cloth before putting a new washer, the same size back on. You may be able to just push it back on, or it may be held on by a small nut.

Reassemble the tap correctly and turn on your water supply. You should have fixed the dripping tap.

Finding out whether you have a leak on your mains supply?

You can usually carry out a simple leak test to see if you have a supply problem or not. This is easily done by:

- Make sure all of your water services such as washing machines, dishwashers, taps & toilets are not in use or filling.
- Turn off the water at your internal stop valve. This is normally found under your sink.
- Take a reading on the meter (including the red digits)
- Wait one hour
- Take a further reading on the meter
- If the second reading is higher than the first reading, there may be a leak at your property.

SOURCE: www.water-guide.org.uk/fix-it
www.WasteAware.org.uk

http://www.bbc.co.uk/insideout/london/series9/week_two.shtml

Thames Water