

Toilet Leaks



DETECT & FIX LEAKS

Detect and Fix Toilet Leaks

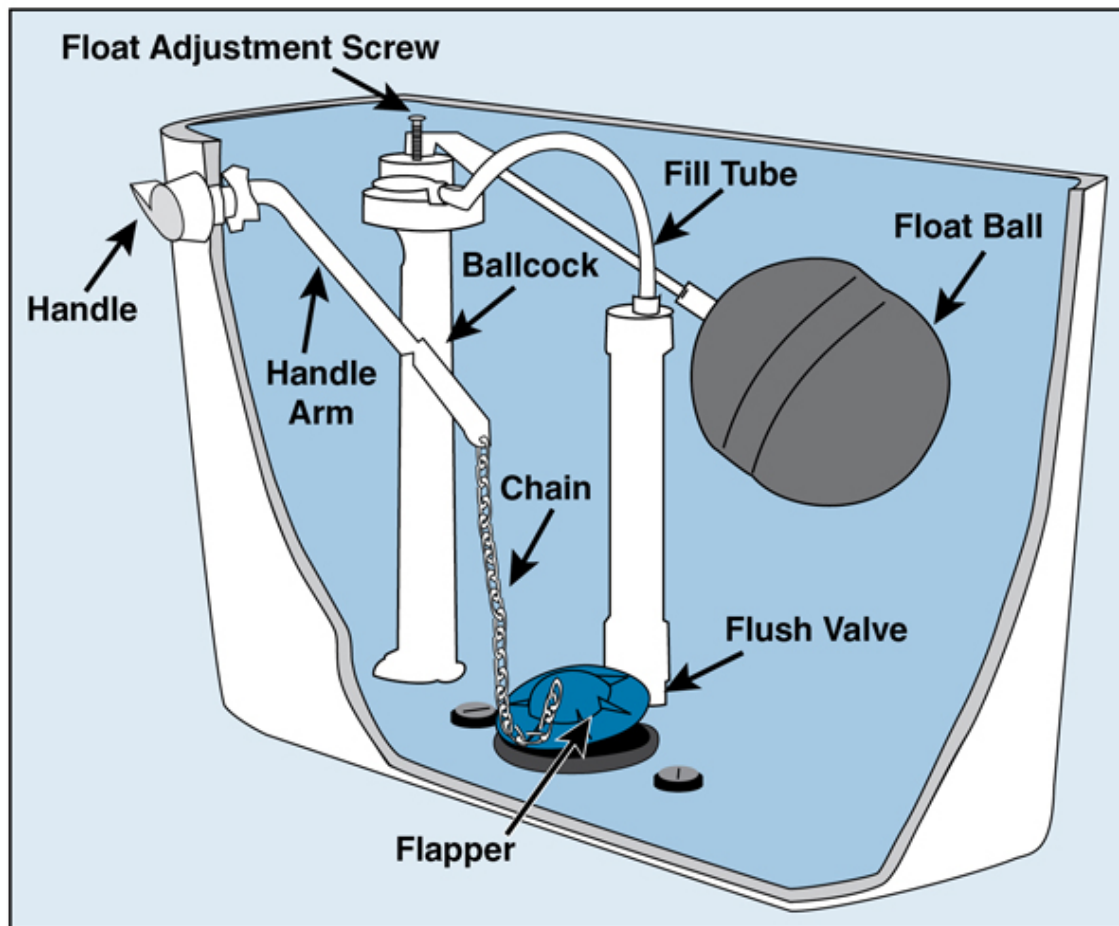
HOW TO DETECT A TOILET LEAK:

Even the new high-efficiency toilets can be water wasters. A leaky flapper valve or an improperly set water level in the tank can cause significant water leakage. And not every "running" toilet makes noise. Even though you might think your toilet isn't leaking, there is one sure fire way to find out.

Lift the lid off the toilet tank and put 10-15 drops of dark-colored food dye into the tank. If you don't have food dye, you can pick up toilet dye tablets at City Hall (3200 Civic Center Circle, NE) on the second floor (Suite 200). After 15 minutes, check the color in the toilet bowl. If there is any sign of the dye color, your toilet is leaking. If the water level looks fine but the dye test shows that the toilet leaks, the two most common culprits are the valve seat, which may need to be cleaned; and the flapper (or tank ball), which may need to be adjusted, cleaned, or replaced.

HOW TO FIX A TOILET LEAK:

The picture below will help you to identify the components of a toilet:



Clean the flapper and valve seat:

If the flapper (or tank ball) is sitting correctly in the valve seat (gasket underneath the flapper) but water is still leaking into the bowl, the problem may be a build-up of mineral deposits on the flapper and/or valve seat.

- Turn off the water at the shutoff valve located just underneath the toilet tank (turn the valve clockwise until it stops). Then flush the toilet to drain the tank.
- Clean the valve seat and the flapper with fine steel wool or a plastic cleansing pad to make sure they are both smooth and free of mineral deposits.
- Turn on the water shutoff valve and conduct the dye test again to check for leaks.

Adjust the flapper (tank ball):

- Check to see if the flapper is fitting properly on the valve seat (gasket underneath the flapper).
- Turn off the water at the shutoff valve located just underneath the toilet tank (turn the valve clockwise until it stops). Then flush the toilet to drain the tank. See if the flapper/tank ball falls straight onto the flush valve opening.
- Adjust the flapper by loosening the thumbscrew that fastens the guide arm to the overflow pipe.
- Reposition the arm and the lift wire so that the tank ball is right above the flush valve (or adjust the flapper so that it will fall directly onto the valve seat).

Replace the flapper (tank ball):

If you've checked to make sure that flapper (tank ball) is correctly positioned in the valve seat (gasket underneath the flapper) and both parts are clean but you still have a leak, your flapper is probably worn out. A worn flapper won't seal properly. To replace the flapper:

- Turn off the water at the shutoff valve located just underneath the toilet tank (turn the valve clockwise until it stops). Then flush the toilet to drain the tank.
- Remove your old flapper and take it with you to the hardware or plumbing store so you can buy a replacement.
- Before installing the new flapper, clean the valve seat with fine steel wool or a plastic cleansing pad to make sure it is smooth.
- Install the new flapper. Then run the dye test again to make sure you have fixed the leak.

Note: Make sure your replacement flapper matches the model and water-use requirements of your existing flapper. Not all generic flappers work equally well. Some toilets rely on a specific flapper to create the low-flow flush.

If the toilet STILL leaks try these methods:

If none of the listed procedures has fixed the leak, or the toilet is making a high whine or whistle sound when the tank is filling up, consider replacing the ball cock, the mechanism that controls the flow of water into the toilet tank. Replacement ball cocks are sold at hardware, plumbing, and home improvement stores

Replacing the Ball Cock:

Although it is possible to replace an older ball cock with a new one, consider replacing it with a new float cup valve, which many plumbers prefer because it is less prone to leaking.

- Turn off the water shutoff valve and flush the toilet to drain the tank.
- Disconnect the water supply tube from the bottom of the tank.
- Remove the float arm from the ball cock.
- Remove the refill tube from the top of the ball cock.
- Loosen the nut under the tank that holds the ball cock into place. If the ball cock turns when you try to loosen the nut, hold the ball cock with one hand while loosening the nut under the tank with your other hand. Once the nut is removed, lift the ball cock out of the tank.
- Install a new float cup valve into the tank and tighten the nut on the underside of the tank.
- Attach the refill tube to the float cup and to the overflow tube.
- Reconnect the water supply tube and turn on the water supply.
- Adjust the float cup until the water level is about 1/2 inch below the top of the overflow tube. To adjust the water level, simply pinch the spring clip on the side of the cup and move the cup higher (to raise the water level) or lower (to lower the water level.).

If none of the above procedures works, call a professional plumber!