

WATER WATCH

Water is a shared and limited resource that we rely on every day. On average, a person uses about 80 to 100 gallons of water a day. In Hennepin County, drinking water comes from a variety of sources. Drinking water sources include surface water such as the Mississippi River or other lakes and streams, and ground water that is pulled through wells from pools of water deep underground called aquifers. Some people are supplied water from a city or other public water source, while others get water from private wells located on or near their property. Regardless of where your water comes from, it takes energy to clean the water, transport it to our homes and use it in our daily activities, so we should take steps to reduce water consumption.

Outcome

Participants will learn how much water is used and wasted in everyday activities and will consider how to use less water.

Audience

Youth (ages 6-12), adults

Time

30 minutes

Concepts

- Daily activities can use a lot of water, which is a limited resource.
- By thinking about your activities, you can reduce the amount of water you use.

Supplies

- Empty plastic gallon milk jugs (about five per participant), five-gallon pails, or other physical representation of gallons of water.
- Props representing the activities listed in the table below, or the name of the activity written on a card or piece of paper.
- A larger bucket filled with water to represent the drinking water source for the participants' homes or program site (surface or ground water). A smaller container (1 cup) to represent a gallon of water. *(optional)*

Activity	Suggested prop	Average gallons of water used
Brushing teeth	Toothbrush or toothpaste	2 (with tap running)
Flushing toilet	Toilet paper	2 – 5
Taking a bath or shower	Soap or shampoo	30 – 50
Washing clothes	Detergent	30 – 60
Washing dishes	Soap or dish soap	10 – 20 (by hand or machine)
Watering the yard	Hose or watering can	10 – 15 per minute
Washing the car	Toy car	50 – 100



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Preparation

Prepare the materials described in the table. Clear a large space for your group to spread out and work in teams.

Procedure

- Have participants research where the drinking water supplied to their homes or program site comes from. Label the larger bucket of water with that drinking source.
- Ask participants to name ways they and their families use water every day. As participants name one of the activities for which you have a prop or sign, give it to the participants. Once all props are given out, have participants with no props join with those who do as team members.
- Have the teams decide how many gallons of water are typically used to accomplish their activity. When ready, each group should put the prop or sign on the ground with the number of milk gallons next to it (if you run out of gallons, participants can write down their guess). Or have the participants fill up their milk jug or container with the number of gallons (represented by the smaller cup or container) that each activity requires.
- Discuss each activity, asking the whole group if the guess is correct, too high or too low. Reveal the actual amounts. Fill your containers with the correct amount of water.
- Ask participants to calculate how much water, on average, they likely use every day based on the amounts listed in the table. People typically use 80 to 100 gallons a day.
- Ask participants to brainstorm actions to reduce water use. Ideas include turning off the tap while brushing teeth or washing dishes, taking a shower instead of a bath, limiting shower time to five minutes or less, only watering the lawn when it's needed, and watering the yard in the early morning or late evening when it's cool outside.

Discussion questions

- What did you learn from participating in water watch?
- How did you feel after calculating water usage?
- What actions can you take to conserve water?
- What else do you want to learn about water?