

Plumbing

Your plumbing should need only minimum maintenance if cared for properly. If any problems do develop, attend to them immediately to prevent larger, more costly problems.

Shutoff Valves

Shutoff valves control water flow to a particular appliance. Shutoff valves can usually be found under sinks and toilets and behind clothes washers, water heaters and other appliances. Locating the main water shutoff valve is very important, [click here](#) for more information.

Periodically examine each shutoff valve for signs of leaks. Look for water, green crust or water stains on the valve, surrounding pipes and floor underneath. If the valve leaks, you can tighten the valve fittings with a wrench. Do not over tighten. If the leak continues, call a professional plumber.

Drains

Each plumbing fixture in your house has a drain trap. This U-shaped piece of pipe is designed to provide a water barrier that prevents air-borne bacteria and the odor of sewer gas from entering the house. Any fixture that is used infrequently should be turned on at regular intervals to replace evaporating water and insure that the barrier remains intact. Because of their shape, traps are also the source of most clogging problems.

Clogged drains are discussed in the Plumbing Emergencies section, [here](#). Common sense can prevent your drains from clogging. Don't pour grease down a drain. Keep your drains free of hair and other debris. Do not use lye or its derivatives. It can damage your plastic drain pipe.

"Flush" your drains once a month to prevent residual grease and soap from clogging drains. Run hot water through the drain. Add three tablespoons of baking soda. Add a little more hot water. Let stand for 15 minutes, then "flush" again by running more hot water.

Plumbing Fixtures

A variety of commercial cleaners are available for cleaning sinks, showers, tubs, toilets and other plumbing fixtures. Follow the manufacturer's directions when using a cleaner. Regular cleaning will prevent soap scum buildup and discoloration. Don't use abrasive cleaners.

Periodically examine each sink and other plumbing fixture for signs of water leaking from the fixture, the water supply or the drain. Look for water, green crust or water stains on pipes, fittings and the floor underneath. You can tighten leaky plumbing fittings with a wrench. Do not over tighten. If the leak continues, call a professional plumber.

Toilets

Overflowing or clogged toilets are discussed in the Plumbing Emergencies section [here](#). Never flush hair, grease, lint, diapers, sanitary products or rubbish down the toilet. These wastes can stop up toilets and sewer lines.

Inspect the base of the toilet and the water supply line for leaks. If the water chamber appears to leak, the water may only be condensation forming on the outside of the tank. If you think that the toilet is leaking or if you are having other problems, consult a plumbing repair book or call a professional plumber.



A loose toilet can weaken the seal between the toilet and the drain pipe. Water can then leak along the toilet's base and damage the floor. Test the toilet mounts by grabbing the toilet with your hands and try to rock it from side to side. If the toilet moves, tighten the nuts holding the toilet to the floor on either side of the base. Tighten until snug, then test again.

Faucets

Many sinks today have modern, washerless faucets. The standard compression faucets with a washer are also common. If a faucet leaks or malfunctions, consult a plumbing repair book or call a professional plumber.

The only maintenance your faucets should require is to clean the aerators. Aerators add air to the water as it leaves the faucet, eliminating splashing and reducing water usage. To clean an aerator, unscrew it from the mouth of the faucet, remove any deposits, remove and rinse the washers and screens, replace in their original order and put back on the faucet.

Noisy Pipes

Noisy pipes can be more than an annoyance, vibrations accompanying the noise can loosen plumbing fittings and cause leaks. Noise can be caused by a number of reasons, including worn washers, loose parts in a faucet and steam in hot water pipes.

You should repair noisy pipes promptly. If you cannot locate the cause of the noise or cannot make the repair yourself, call a professional plumber.

Caulking

Caulking is used to seal around bathtubs, sinks and showers. It is normal for caulking to dry out or crack after several years. Periodically inspect caulking around sinks, showers and tubs. Look for signs of deterioration. Remove the old caulking and replace with fresh caulk. This is a simple do-it-yourself project. If you do not have a caulking gun, caulking material can be bought in applicator tubes or in disposable caulking guns.

Outdoor Plumbing

To prevent frozen pipes, drain water from outdoor faucets and pipes, insulate and wrap exposed pipes and remove and store outdoor hoses. If a pipe should freeze, click [here](#).

Polybutylene Piping

This type of piping has a history of problems and should be examined by a licensed plumber and repaired or replaced as necessary. Visit <http://www.polybutylene.com/> and pbpipe.com for more information.