

How Can You Conserve Water?

We hope that reading the feature article about the NIH water conservation program has inspired you to participate in water conservation efforts too, both at home and at work. The following suggestions will help you get started:

1. Use less water at work:

- a. Consolidate autoclave use, which requires water and steam to sterilize research equipment. Waiting to run the autoclave until you have a full load means less cycles overall and a water savings. Autoclaves should also receive regular maintenance to ensure they are using accurate quantities of water.
- b. Request service for water leaks! Fill out the [building maintenance](#) form or call (301) 435-8000 to request NIH Maintenance to address water leaks. Malfunctioning water fixtures and water leaks can significantly contribute to the water use at NIH. Reporting these as soon as they occur helps to conserve water.

2. Use less water at home:

- a. Lower your water usage by taking shorter showers and turning off the faucet while brushing your teeth or scrubbing your hands.
- b. Improve the efficiency of your water appliances by upgrading old models. Installing faucet aerators, replacing shower heads with more-efficient versions or purchasing a low-flow toilet can all create significant changes to the amount of water you use.
- c. Consolidate dishwasher and washing machine loads whenever possible. Waiting until you have a full load greatly reduces the number of times these appliances are operated.

Water quality should be considered of equal importance to water conservation. Consider some of these suggestions to help maintain clean water, both at work and at home:

1. Do not dispose of unapproved chemicals down the drain. At NIH, you can apply for approval by clicking [this link](#). Otherwise, chemical waste should be stored appropriately and then collected by Chemical Waste Services by calling (301) 496-4710. When at home, avoid using pesticides and toxic cleaning products.
2. Report oil, gasoline or other substances you observe around campus to (301) 435-8000. These substances will be transported into local water bodies if they are not cleaned up.
3. Participate in Drug Take Back programs! Participating in a Drug Take Back program provides a safe method for disposing of drugs, while also reducing water use and drug abuse. Disposing of drugs through sinks and toilets could negatively impact water quality by contaminating water sources.¹ The NIH frequently pairs with the DEA and local Sheriff's offices to host Drug Take Back events. The next Drug Take Back Day at NIH is April 25, so please watch for more information as the event approaches. Additionally, the DEA typically organizes [Drug Take Back events](#) in the spring and fall each year and sponsors [year-round authorized collectors](#).