

AN OUNCE OF
PREVENTION...
**CAN KEEP GALLONS
OF WATER AWAY**

BY JONATHAN CHEEVER





A WATER LEAK CAN BE A HOMEOWNER'S HORROR, AND FOR GOOD REASON.

Saturated carpets rendered useless. Musty-smelling, allergy-triggering mold growing. Severe warping of wooden beams and flooring. Treasured mementos lost.

Not to mention the cost to repair and restore the damaged home. According to a report by [ISO/Verisk](#), the average insurance claim from water damage is nearly \$8,900. I know the cost is expensive from working with some of my clients who have experienced water damage. And just recently, during a visit with my father, we discovered he had a flooded basement.

Cleaning up and fixing a water leak is hard. But prevention can be easy. Here are seven tips for protecting your home from water damage:

MAINTAIN A MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

When the seasons change, you should spring into action. Take an hour and check all exposed pipes in your basement for signs of leaks or wet spots on the basement floor. Crawl under each sink and toilet, and inspect the valves and pipes for the same symptoms. Tighten all connections. If you see evidence of trouble, call a plumber unless you are a skilled DIYer.

Tip: *If the water supply lines – for your toilet or sinks – are plastic, replace them with braided stainless-steel lines. They are available at any home supply store, and there are YouTube videos aplenty to guide you through the simple installation process. Hot water can wear down plastic, but braided stainless-steel over rubber tubing can offer better protection against catastrophic failure.*

LEARN WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW

Do you know where to find your main water valve, which can halt all water to your house in an instant? Make sure you know not only where it is, but how to quickly shut it off if a mini-Niagara Falls is cascading through your ceiling.

Tip: *The main water valve is typically located inside the house (most likely in a basement, if you have one) or outside, near where the water meter is found. It will be equipped with a wheel-shaped handle or a lever for easy shut-off.*

EASE THE PRESSURE

If water pressure is too high, it can wreak havoc on a home's water pipes. The maximum recommended pressure for homes is 80 pounds per square inch (psi), and a safe range is between 55 and 75 psi.

Tip: *Test your water pressure using an inexpensive gauge from a home supply retailer. Attach it to your outside spigot and slowly turn on the water to that particular spigot while making sure no other area of the home is using water at the time. If you get readings lower than the safe range above, you may have undetected leaks. Call a plumber right away to investigate before a small drip swells to a big problem. If you get a reading higher than the range above, a plumber can help you reduce your pressure, or you can do it yourself with online video guidance.*

BE PRUDENT

There are plenty of things you can do on a one-time or regular basis to avoid leaks. For instance, drain your water heater annually to flush sediment out of the system, and shut off the water supply to your washing machine when you go on vacation.

Tip: *Set your washing machine on a drip pan, which will collect water from leaks or overflows so you can spot a potential problem.*

INSTALL A WATER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The easiest way to prevent water damage is a leak detection system with an automatic shut-off function. The system that I use is [GROHE Sense™](#) & [GROHE Sense Guard™](#) because it is a comprehensive water management system. The system leverages smart home technology to offer reliable protection against costly water damage by constantly monitoring for excess moisture or leaks and notifying homeowners using a convenient smartphone app.

Tip: *It's worth it. The money invested in an early-detection system will be significantly less than the cost of clean-up, repair and restoration if a leak does occur, even just one time. What if you already have damage from a leak? Check out my tips on what to do after you get a leak. But the old adage – “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” – applies to water leak prevention, too. Better to spend a few hours and dollars now to keep the water out, rather than thousands to get the water out.*

MONITOR THE MONEY

Examine your water bill when it arrives each month or quarter. Is there a big spike in usage or cost? If you can't explain why it might be higher than usual (like filling a backyard pool), call a plumber to investigate. There could be a slow leak somewhere in your water system.

Tip: *Believe it or not, a minor leak in a toilet – in which an old, poorly sealed flapper can dribble water from the tank into the bowl – can waste up to 200 gallons of water per day. It may not cause water damage, but the water waste can do some damage to your wallet. A sure sign of a flapper problem? Ghost flushing, which is when the toilet flushes on its own every few minutes. Simply replace the flapper to solve the problem.*

CLEAN YOUR GUTTERS

Huh, you may be asking? How will clean gutters keep water out of my house? Gutters clogged with leaves, twigs and other debris can cause rainwater to back up and pour over the side, rather than flowing through the downspout. In heavy rain, the extra saturation can seep down around the foundation, and into your home. Standing water can rot the fascia boards adjacent to the gutters, allowing another point of entry via the roof and walls.

Tip: *Consider investing in a gutter protection system so you'll never climb a tall ladder to clean your gutters again to keep your home safe and dry.*

Whether it is a heavy rainstorm or a leaky pipe, the bottom line is that things happen. Following my practical advice and taking the proper measures now can prevent water damage to your home in the future.



Jonathan Cheever has been a U.S. Snowboard Team member since 2005 and is an elite level athlete in snowboard cross. In the off-season, Cheever works for his father's plumbing company in Saugus, Mass., as a vocation to support his passion for snowboarding. He has been a licensed journeyman plumber since 2004.

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