

25

Facts

a b o u t

water



Give drinking water a hand.





Water needs our help. We have the same amount of water today as we did when the Earth was formed. Constant use and pollution threaten our water resources. For example, 600,000 pounds of pollutants are pouring into our water resources every day. That's just industrial waste. Experts estimate that non-point pollution, that is, agricultural and urban runoff, as well as residential dribs and drabs of pollution, threatens our water resources more than industry.

The Blue Thumb Program shows us how to take better care of our water resources. It promotes three basic actions as the keys to water care: conserve water, protect it from pollution, and get involved in drinking water issues in your local community.



You can practice "Blue Thumb" actions at home, at work, at school, and in any public place. Each day we are confronted with scores of decisions that affect drinking water. We have the opportunity to make a water decision every time we reach out our hand to turn on the tap and every time we notice a dripping faucet, see a business running its sprinklers on a rainy day, buy toxic cleaners, put fertilizer on the lawn, choose to buy recycled paper products, or read about a public meeting on local land use. We can make a difference if we practice the Blue Thumb basics of conserving, protecting, and getting involved.



25 Facts About Water

Each of us has a role in keeping water safe to drink. Just as “green thumb” people know how to care for plants, people with “Blue Thumbs” know how to take care of water. We invite you to show your “Blue Thumb” and take action to conserve and protect our water resources every day. To help you learn more about water, here are 25 basic facts:

- 1 Water is the most common substance found on earth.
- 2 In 1989, Americans dumped 365 million gallons of motor oil or the equivalent of 27 Exxon Valdez spills.
- 3 Of all the earth’s water, 97% is salt water located in oceans and seas.
- 4 Only 1% of the earth’s water is available for drinking water.
- 5 About two thirds of the human body is water. Some parts of the body contain more water than others. For example, 70% of your skin is water.

6 There are more than 200,000 individual water systems providing water to the public in the United States.

7 Public water suppliers process 34 billion gallons of water per day for domestic and public use.

8 Approximately 1 million miles of pipelines and aqueducts carry water in the United States and Canada. That's enough to circle the earth 40 times.

9 About 800,000 water wells are drilled each year in the United States for domestic, farming, commercial, and water testing purposes.

10 Sixty-one percent of Americans rely on lakes, rivers, and streams as their source of drinking water. The other 39% rely on groundwater — water located underground in aquifers and wells.

11 In 1974, Congress passed the Safe Drinking Water Act to ensure that drinking water is safe for consumption. The Act requires public water systems to monitor and treat drinking water for safety.



12 More than 13 million households drink from their own private wells and are responsible for treating and pumping the water themselves.

13 Industries released 197 million pounds of toxic chemicals into waterways in 1990 alone.

14 The average daily requirement for fresh water in the United States is about 338 billion gallons a day, with about 300 billion gallons used as untreated water and for agriculture and other commercial purposes.

15 You can survive about a month without food, but only 5 to 7 days without water.

16 Each person uses about 100 gallons of water a day at home.

17 The average five-minute shower takes between 25–50 gallons of water.

18 You can refill an 8 oz. glass of water approximately 15,000 times for the same cost as a six-pack of pop.

19 The average automatic dishwasher uses 9–12 gallons of water while hand washing dishes can take up to 20 gallons.



- 20 If every household in America had a faucet that dripped once each second, we would waste 928 million gallons of water a day.
- 21 The 5 Great Lakes bordering the United States and Canada contain about 20 % of the world's available fresh water.
- 22 More than 39,000 gallons of water are used to manufacture a new car, including tires.
- 23 Water is a main ingredient in other beverages and it takes water to process them. For example, it takes 1,500 gallons of water to make 1 barrel of beer.
- 24 Seventy-five percent of a tree is water.
- 25 One gallon of gasoline can contaminate approximately 750,000 gallons of water.



For more information on drinking water
and to join the Blue Thumb Club, send your special
conservation or anti-pollution tip to
American Water Works Association,
Public Information Department,
6666 West Quincy Avenue, Denver, Colorado 80235

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