



## Learn About Water – Facts & Figures

Without clean water we could not survive – did you know that you can live for around a month without food but just 5-7 days without water?

But fresh water is a scarce resource (See the ‘How wet is our Planet?’ sheet)

- Of all Earth’s water, 97.5% is salt water while only 2.5% is fresh water.
- Of the fresh water nearly 70% is locked in glacial ice and 30% in soil, leaving less than 1% available for human use.
- Of this 1%, nearly 70% is used for agriculture, 22% for industry leaving just 8% for domestic use.

The water footprint of humanity has exceeded sustainable levels in many areas and nearly one third of the world’s population is already facing problems due to both water shortage and water contamination.

- An estimated 1.1 billion people currently lack access to clean water
- 2.6 billion lack basic sanitation

### **The Water Problem**

In the world’s poorest areas the people living outside cities (particularly women and children) have to walk miles each day to collect water from distant sources in order to drink, bathe and grow food.

The average distance a person in Africa walks to collect water is 2-4 miles – having to carry about 20kgs of water on the return trip. Imagine walking that distance every day.

The hours spent collecting water mean that the children aren’t able to go to school or work to earn a living.

Over 80% of people living in rural areas of Africa rely on the crops and animals they raise to survive

However, because they don’t have access to sufficient clean water crops and animals die. Faced with such conditions poverty is inevitable.

### **Cleanliness**

Often the people in these poor rural areas only have access to contaminated water.

Unsafe water and a lack of basic sanitation in developing countries can be blamed for up to 80% of illness and disease including cholera, dysentery & typhoid.

This results in 2.2 million deaths each year – mostly among children who are more vulnerable to disease.

### **How it's used**

The wealthiest countries of the world are using the majority of the world's available water.

An average American uses about 575 litres of water per day.

The average European uses between 150-250 litres of water per day.

The 1.1 billion poorest people in the world are surviving on less than 19 litres of water a day.

In the developed world only about 2 litres of water are actually consumed each day while the remainder is mostly wasted on activities like flushing the toilet, handwashing dishes and watering gardens.

- Flushing the toilet uses approx 10 litres of water
- Taking a 5 minute shower uses approx 25litres of water
- Having a bath uses approx 80 litres of water
- Brushing your teeth can waste up to 7.5 litres of water
- Running your dishwasher or washing wachine before they are completely full can waste up to 2500 litres of water

Most of us also don't consider the amount of water used in the production of everyday products:

- 140 litres of water to produce a cup of coffee
- 200 litres of water to produce a can of coke
- 1000 litres of water to produce a litre of milk
- 3000 litres to produce 1kg of rice
- 8000 litres of water to produce a pair of leather shoes

Water consumption has advanced beyond sustainable levels in many areas of the world.

Water tables are falling and lakes and rivers are drying up, destroying natural ecosystems and in turn creating human suffering.

## **What Can We DO?**

The following are a few simple ways in which we can all begin conserving water:

- Flush toilets less frequently
- Take quick showers instead of baths
- Use a bowl to do the washing up rather than leaving the tap running
- Turn the water off when brushing your teeth or washing your face.
- Fill dishwashers and washing machines completely before turning them on
- Don't contaminate the water supply by putting medicines or paints etc down the sink
- Ensure taps are properly turned off to avoid dripping and fix leaky taps.
- Water lawns and gardens in the morning or evening when temperatures are cooler to minimise water evaporation. Install a water butt to collect rainwater and use a watering can instead of a hose.

Try working out your water footprint at:

[www.waterfootprint.org](http://www.waterfootprint.org) and going to the 'water footprint calculator'

or go to:

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in\\_depth/629/629/5086298.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/629/629/5086298.stm)

or work out your total ecological footprint by going to:

<http://footprint.wwf.org.uk/>

