

Annual Whole-House Plumbing Inspection Checklist



A Comprehensive Guide for Homeowners

Quick Overview

An annual whole-house plumbing inspection helps you catch small problems before they become expensive repairs. By checking your water supply lines, drains, fixtures, water heater, and outdoor plumbing once a year, you can reduce the risk of leaks, water damage, mold growth, and unexpected plumbing emergencies.

This checklist is designed for homeowners and beginners and can be completed over a few hours.

Before You Start

- Choose a day when you have enough time to inspect the entire property.
- Locate the main water shut-off valve and make sure everyone in the home knows where it is.
- Gather any maintenance records from previous inspections or repairs.
- Make a list of any plumbing problems you have noticed during the past year.
- Check that all utility rooms, crawl spaces, basements, and attics are accessible.
- Make sure you have adequate lighting for dark areas.
- Review the owner's manuals for your water heater, water softener, and other plumbing equipment if available.
- Keep a notebook or mobile device nearby to record any issues that need future attention.

Tools, Supplies, or Resources Needed

- Flashlight or headlamp
- Small mirror for tight spaces
- Adjustable wrench
- Screwdriver set
- Bucket
- Towels or rags
- Food coloring for toilet leak testing
- Garden hose
- Water pressure gauge
- Camera or smartphone for documentation
- Protective gloves
- Safety glasses
- Pen and inspection notes

Step-by-Step Checklist

Main Water Supply

- Locate and inspect the main water shut-off valve for corrosion, leaks, or stiffness.
- Turn the valve slightly if recommended by the manufacturer to ensure it operates properly.
- Inspect the main water line entering the home for visible leaks or rust.
- Check the home's water pressure using a pressure gauge. Ideal residential pressure is generally between 40 and 80 PSI.

Water Heater Inspection

- Look around the base of the water heater for moisture or rust stains.
- Inspect all water connections for slow leaks.
- Check the temperature setting. Around 120°F is recommended for most homes.
- Inspect the temperature and pressure relief valve discharge pipe for proper installation.
- Examine the venting system on gas water heaters for loose or damaged connections.
- Flush sediment from the tank if recommended by the manufacturer.
- Check the expansion tank for signs of waterlogging or corrosion if one is installed.

Indoor Water Supply Pipes

- Inspect exposed pipes under sinks and inside cabinets for leaks.
- Check for corrosion, mineral buildup, or discoloration.
- Look for signs of pipe movement or loose supports.
- Inspect pipes in attics, crawl spaces, and basements for moisture or insulation damage.
- Replace deteriorated pipe insulation where needed.

Faucets and Fixtures

- Turn on every faucet and check for drips or leaks.
- Verify that hot and cold water operate correctly.
- Inspect around faucet bases for signs of water intrusion.
- Clean faucet aerators if water flow appears restricted.
- Check showerheads for leaks or excessive mineral buildup.

Toilets

- Add a few drops of food coloring to each toilet tank and wait 15 minutes to check for silent leaks.
- Inspect the toilet base for water stains or movement.
- Flush every toilet to confirm proper operation.
- Check the shut-off valve and supply line for leaks.
- Ensure the fill valve and flapper are functioning properly.

Sinks, Tubs, and Showers

- Fill and drain each fixture while watching for leaks underneath.
- Inspect caulking around tubs and showers for cracks.
- Check overflow drains for proper operation.

- Verify that drains clear quickly without backing up.

Drains and Waste Lines

- Listen for unusual gurgling sounds that could indicate venting problems.
- Inspect visible drain pipes for leaks or corrosion.
- Check cleanout plugs for accessibility and condition.
- Watch for slow drains that may indicate developing blockages.

Garbage Disposal

- Run cold water and operate the disposal to confirm smooth operation.
- Listen for unusual noises or vibration.
- Inspect the mounting assembly and drain connections for leaks.
- Check the reset button location for future reference.

Dishwasher and Refrigerator Water Lines

- Inspect supply hoses for cracks, bulges, or wear.
- Look for moisture around appliance connections.
- Confirm shut-off valves operate properly.

Washing Machine Plumbing

- Inspect hot and cold supply hoses for deterioration.
- Replace old rubber hoses with braided stainless steel hoses if needed.
- Check the drain hose for secure installation.
- Look for leaks behind and underneath the machine.

Outdoor Plumbing

- Inspect exterior hose bibs for leaks or freeze damage.
- Test outdoor faucets for proper operation.

- Check irrigation systems for broken heads or leaks.
- Inspect exposed outdoor piping for damage.
- Verify yard drains are free of debris.

Sump Pump (If Installed)

- Pour water into the sump pit to verify pump operation.
- Check the discharge pipe for obstructions.
- Inspect the check valve for proper function.
- Confirm battery backup systems are operational if equipped.

Water Softener and Filtration Systems

- Check for leaks around tanks and fittings.
- Verify salt levels if applicable.
- Replace filters according to manufacturer recommendations.
- Inspect drain connections for proper operation.

Check for Hidden Leaks

- Turn off all water fixtures and observe the water meter for movement.
- Compare current water bills to previous months for unusual increases.
- Inspect ceilings, walls, and flooring for water stains.
- Look for mold, mildew, or musty odors.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Ignoring small drips because they seem harmless.
- Forgetting to inspect hidden plumbing areas.
- Using chemical drain cleaners as routine maintenance.
- Overlooking appliance supply hoses.
- Neglecting outdoor plumbing fixtures.
- Failing to document problems found during the inspection.

- Waiting until a plumbing emergency occurs before calling a professional.

Safety, Quality, or Success Tips

- Wear gloves and eye protection when inspecting plumbing equipment.
- Never touch electrical components while standing in water.
- Keep a record of repairs and maintenance dates.
- Replace aging hoses before they fail.
- Photograph any damage for insurance or repair purposes.
- Address minor issues promptly to prevent costly damage.

Final Review Checklist

- The entire home has been inspected.
- All fixtures have been tested.
- Water supply lines have been checked.
- Drain systems have been evaluated.
- The water heater has been inspected.
- Appliance water connections have been examined.
- Outdoor plumbing has been checked.
- Any leaks or defects have been documented.
- Maintenance records have been updated.
- Repairs requiring professional service have been identified.

When to Get Help

Contact a licensed plumber if you discover:

- Water stains with no obvious source.
- Active leaks inside walls or ceilings.
- Low water pressure throughout the home.
- Sewer odors inside the house.
- Repeated drain backups.

- **Water heater leaks or venting problems.**
- **Cracked or severely corroded pipes.**
- **Water meter movement when no water is being used.**
- **Foundation moisture related to plumbing leaks.**
- **Any plumbing issue that you are not comfortable repairing safely.**

A professional annual inspection can identify hidden issues that may not be visible during a homeowner inspection and can help extend the life of your entire plumbing system.