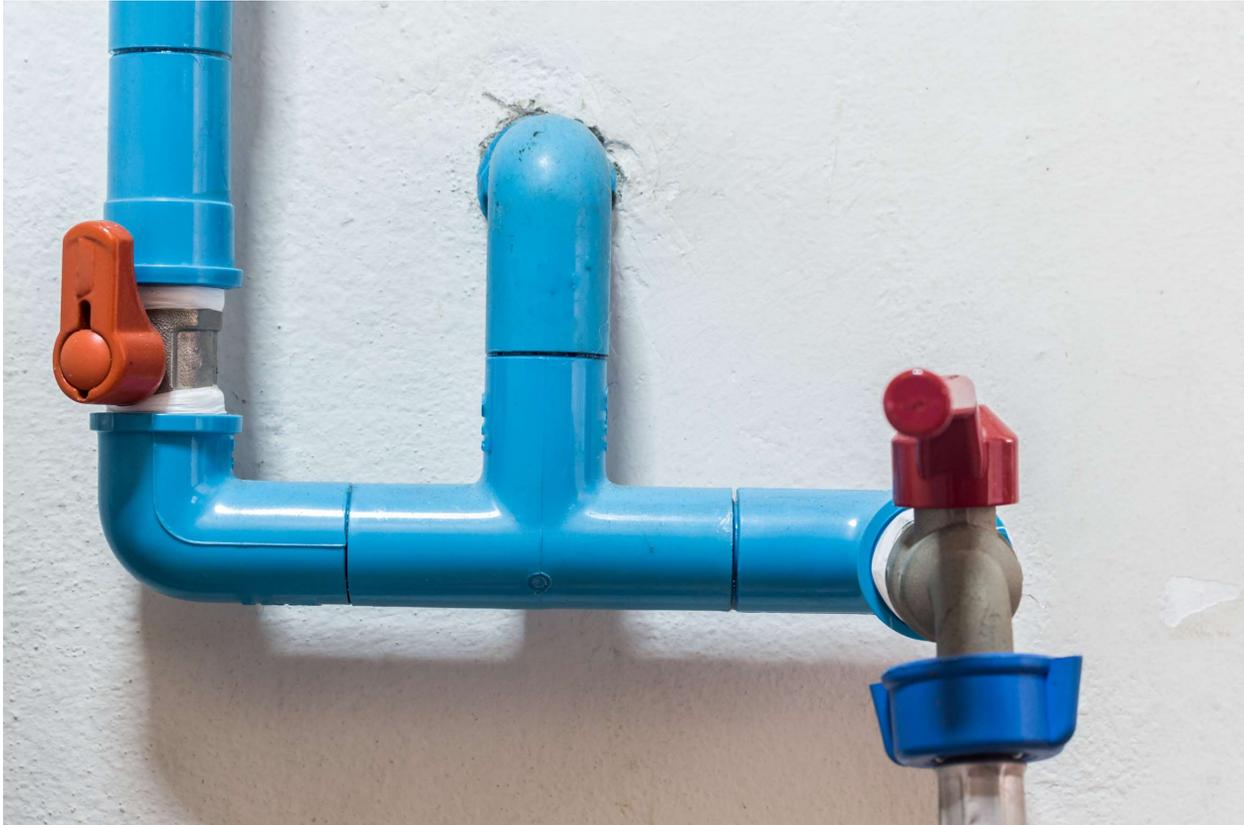


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3 tips to avoid costly plumbing repairs

One of the things most new homeowners agree on is that they weren't prepared to take on routine home maintenance chores. From paying someone to perform them to learning how to do them yourself to remembering to periodically inspect the home's systems, becoming a homeowner brings with it a slew of new responsibilities.

Although toilets can last pretty much forever, there are moving parts in the tank that require maintenance and, often, repair.

Homeadvisor.com claims that the nationwide average for toilet repairs is \$200. Here in Billings, you can plan on paying more than \$149 for the plumber's labor and the cost of the toilet if it needs to be replaced.

Be a smart homeowner and use our home maintenance checklist and put the toilet at the top of the list. Then, be kind to the toilet – it will save you money.

Leaks do more than waste water

Water damage is one of the most common and costly home repairs and leaking toilets are one of the most common that plumbers face. The culprit is, typically, the wax ring, according to Ted O'Brien with O'Brien Plumbing in Kailua-Kona, HI. The wax ring is the gasket tasked with sealing the toilet to the floor. Although the toilet itself can last practically forever, the ring will give out eventually, causing water to seep from the base of the toilet.

If you don't notice the leak, and it continues, it may spread throughout the subfloor, creating an even bigger and more expensive problem. The ring itself is inexpensive and if you're handy, you can replace it yourself.

“ How do you know if the wax ring needs to be replaced?

If the bathroom smells like sewage, suspect a faulty ring. Bad odors, however, are also caused by clogged pipes and sewer problems, however, so you may need a plumber to investigate.

Spongy-feeling flooring around the base of the toilet is another tell-tale sign and, if the bathroom is located upstairs, check the ceiling in the room below for water stains.

Inspect the gadgets inside the tank

A toilet that doesn't stop running creates more than an annoying sound; it's a water waster as well. The folks at familyhandyman.com claim that, because there are only two main parts inside the tank, the cause of the problem is easy to diagnose.

“ The flush valve or the fill valve is the culprit.

To determine which it is, follow the site's tutorial at familyhandyman.com/plumbing. Click on "Toilet Repair" and then "Parts of a Toilet."

Prevent the problem by inspecting the inside of the tank at least twice a year, according to O'Brien. Flush the toilet and watch the gadgets as they work.

Watch what you flush

From toys to so-called flushable wipes, O'Brien laughs at the items he's found clogging toilets and pipes, although the homeowners probably didn't find it so humorous when they received the bill to pluck the items from the home's plumbing system.

Teach little ones that nothing goes into the toilet except toilet paper and use a biological drain cleaner periodically to help keep the drain free of organic material.

Keeping the home maintained on a routine basis will not only help you save money now, but make money when it's time to sell.