

Check for Patches of Greener Grass

Everyone wants a lush lawn, but if an area in your yard is much greener (and grows faster) than the rest of the grass, it could indicate the spot where a buried water line is leaking. If the leak is profuse, you might even see some puddles on the surface of the ground.

Investigate Appliances and Fixtures

If the water meter test indicates a leak inside your home, check the cabinets under the kitchen, laundry, and bathroom sinks to make sure they're dry. You'll also want to look for puddles around the bases of tubs, toilets, and showers and beneath the water heater, dishwasher, and clothes washer.

Dye Test the Toilet

If you don't find any puddles around fixtures or appliances, check if the toilet needs to be repaired, because it's a prime spot for interior leaking. The toilet's flapper (a rubber stopper that prevents water from entering the bowl until you flush the toilet) can become brittle over time, allowing water to trickle from the tank into the bowl. Grab a bottle of food coloring and put a few drops in the tank of every toilet in the house. If a toilet tank is leaking, color will appear in the bowl within five minutes. If you find color in the bowl, call a plumber or, if you're handy with DIY projects, you can probably replace the flapper yourself.

Other Clues that may indicate a leak

- **Wall discoloration.** This could indicate water leaking from behind the drywall and soaking through to the front side. Water stains on ceilings and walls are usually yellowish or brownish in color.
- **Bubbling paint or bulging wallpaper.** Both are signs that the wallboard is wet and the paint or wallpaper is no longer adhering tightly. In some cases, you may also notice a bulge in the wallboard, which indicates the water damage is more extensive and the wallboard will have to be replaced.
- **A dripping sound.** While some leaks are totally silent—for instance, if water is traveling along a wall stud—other leaks can sometimes be heard, giving you a clue as to the leak's location.
- **A musty smell.** Over time, a persistent leak provides the perfect humid environment for mold to grow. In some cases, you may notice black splotches on the outside of the wall, but often, mold will grow inside the wall where you can't see it, so a musty smell is a red flag.