



KAISER PERMANENTE

CONSERVING AND PROTECTING OUR WATER RESOURCES

Access to fresh, clean water has been known for centuries to be foundational to health. Keeping pollutants from entering our oceans, groundwater and reservoirs prevents serious adverse health effects. Conserving water means that more is available to those who need it most.

Kaiser Permanente is committed to being good stewards of water. Many of our communities are suffering from drought and related water emergencies, making access to fresh, clean water for drinking, growing food, cleaning and other uses a serious challenge.

Kaiser Permanente works to safeguard our water resources in the following ways:

- Conserving water by lowering our water consumption
- Protecting our natural water systems by reducing chemical waste and other hazards that pollute

Conserving Water

Kaiser Permanente uses water for a variety of needs throughout our health care system. A majority of our water is used in food service, laundry, cleaning, handwashing, plumbing and in the heating and air conditioning systems that keep our hospitals and medical offices comfortable. Water is also used to sterilize medical devices and in other processes specific to health care delivery.

Concerned with growing water scarcity, water-quality risks, and increasing water costs, among other factors, Kaiser Permanente has stepped up its efforts to conserve water.

In 2014, we instituted a national water policy to reduce our water use and support long-term access to quality water supplies for all of our communities. We are evaluating our current progress and looking into longer-term water-saving strategies, which if implemented across all Kaiser Permanente facilities, could reduce consumption by as much as 30 percent and save about \$97,000 annually at each of our medical centers.

Such longer-term water-saving strategies include:

- Retrofitting plumbing fixtures with low-volume and flow-control models in restrooms
- Installing weather-based irrigations systems
- Using chilled water in lieu of tap water for cooling sterilizers (Steam used in sterilizers is cooled with tap water before it is disposed. We are looking at reusing water from our chillers instead of tap water because chilled-water is colder, so the process uses less water)

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FINDING SAFER ALTERNATIVES TO HARMFUL CHEMICALS

Protecting Our Natural Water Systems

Kaiser Permanente recognizes that conserving water is just part of the equation. We have engaged in a comprehensive environmental stewardship program that seeks to mitigate our impact on these fragile systems.

Some examples include:

- Purging more than 630,000 grams of mercury from within our facilities to make the organization virtually mercury free
- Working to reduce chemicals in the environment by procuring products that are “greener”
- Supported sustainable food procurement that encourages less use of pesticides and fertilizers which might seep into our waterways

Kaiser Permanente works with many industry partners to improve sustainability and safety across the health care sector, including the Healthier Hospitals Initiative, Health Care Without Harm and the U.S. Green Building Council. Continued involvement with groups like these provides Kaiser Permanente the opportunity to influence local and state policies that encourage water conservation at health care facilities.

Kaiser Permanente already conserves water in a variety of ways, including:

- Using digital X-ray processing, which enhances image analysis while also cutting down on large amounts of water and chemicals needed for traditional film processing
- Replacing traditional mops with microfiber mops that use significantly less water and also reduce costs, reduce the spread of infection, and make it easier and safer to clean patient rooms
- Replacing in-ground sprinkler systems with drip irrigation systems, which use 20 to 50 percent less water
- Installing weather-monitoring irrigation controls
- Using LEED standards for new construction that reward water-conservation strategies
- Eliminating turf in favor of native and drought-resistant landscaping:
- Looking for leaks and other opportunities to replace aging and faulty equipment with water-saving alternatives
- Harvesting rainwater, grey water and the water used in the process of heating and cooling buildings
- Using low-flow plumbing fixtures, automatic faucets, and dual-flush toilets

