

Does switching off your geyser really save electricity?

 By Jennifer Paddock

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Recently I attended a talk on geysers and was blown away when I heard that turning off your geyser actually doesn't save electricity and therefore actually doesn't save you money. Really? These were professionals talking but, still, I thought I'd turn to trusty Google to confirm whether this outlandish statement was the truth.

Turns out they're right - in most cases anyway!

For those of you who, like me, didn't know much about the technical side of the 'ol geezer, here's the quick and dirty:

- Your geyser is like a big kettle. It has an element inside that heats the water up to a set temperature.
- When a hot tap is turned on, hot water is released from the geyser and cold water rushes in to replace it. As the water temperature in the geyser has now decreased, the element kicks in to heat the water back up to the set temperature.
- When no one is using hot water the temperature of the water should remain the same as no cold water is being let in. However, heat will "leak" out of the geyser into the surrounding area and the rate of the heat leak depends on the quality of your geyser's insulation. These heat leaks cause the water temperature inside the geyser gradually to decrease and the element kicks in to reheat the water when necessary.

So, the argument for turning your geyser off when you are not at home is that the element will not periodically kick in to heat up the water and, therefore, you'll use less electricity. But this doesn't take into account that once switched off, the water in the geyser eventually cools down completely and, when switched on again, a huge amount of energy is required to heat the water back up to the set temperature. In most cases, more energy than if the element was periodically kicking in throughout the day.

The factors that affect the energy consumption of your geyser are:

- The type and condition of your geyser;
- How much hot water you use; and
- How often you use it.

So the best ways to help your geyser conserve energy are the following:

- Only use the hot tap when necessary - washing hands, splashing your face etc. can be done with cold water only;

- Use less hot water when you do use it - short showers or shallow baths rather than long showers and deep baths;
- Turn your geyser off when going away for a few days - then it makes it worth it;
- Ensure your geyser and water pipes are properly insulated - ensuring that heat leak is lessened.

So there you have it.

Happy geyser energy conserving!

ABOUT JENNIFER PADDOCK

Jennifer Paddock is a specialist sectional title attorney and managing partner of Paddock, sectional title and home owners' association specialists.
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