

Efficient Faucets Save on Two Fronts

BY JAMES DULLEY

Dear Jim: I need a new kitchen faucet because the old one leaks cold water. There seem to be many designs available at home center stores. What types are most efficient at saving water and which are most durable? - Russ K.

Dear Russ: It is important to repair or replace a leaking kitchen faucet even if the water coming out feels cold. The dripping water may actually be coming from the hot water side of the faucet valve, but it feels cold because it has time to lose its heat before reaching the faucet. What seems like a small, slow drip can increase both your energy and your water bills.

Several design factors impact a kitchen faucet's overall energy and water use efficiency. The maximum flow rate from the faucet is most important. Many, particularly children, often flip it on full just to rinse their hands. The style and shape of a faucet can also impact its convenience. A more convenient-to-use faucet allows you to turn the water on and off instead of letting it run between brief tasks.

A tall spout faucet, some as high as one foot, provides plenty of clearance to fill large pots or



This tall spout kitchen faucet has a long pullout sprayer for convenience and water savings.

PRICE PHISTER

to get your hands under it to clean foods. These are also stylish with a professional look and are more popular today. If the kitchen faucet has a short or nearly horizontal spout, large pots must be filled in several steps from a smaller pot. This wastes more water down the drain because it is easier to leave the faucet running while the water is transferred from the small to the large pot.

Pull-down faucets, with a sprayer built into the outlet end, are convenient and efficient. Some have about a six-foot long nylon hose to allow for plenty of reach and flexibility. Greater length and flexibility makes it easier and quicker to wash foods and utensils using less water. This feature is particularly helpful if you wash dishes by hand. The soapy dishes can be stacked in a rack and then all rinsed at one time.

Look for a sprayer with an adjustable built-in water-saving volume control. Moen's new Eco-Per-

QUICK TIP

New efficient faucet options can save both water and energy use in a home, cutting two bills in one.

formance models provide three water flow settings for various tasks. The most efficient model uses 37 percent less water. One which easily can be switched between spray or stream mode makes it more effective and efficient. Also, a model with a 360-degree swiveling spout allows for more convenient placement of the faucet control handle.

One of the newest efficiency and convenience features in kitchen faucets is hands-free operation. This can be a significant energy and water saver for kitchens. If you have the water set at the temperature you desire, you do not have to constantly move the handle to turn it on and off. A lot of water and energy are wasted just setting the water temperature. All of these models can still be operated manually like a standard faucet.

The two basic technologies used are a proximity sensor or a touch control. When you put your hands in front of a proximity sensor model, the faucet comes on. I use a touch control pullout faucet in my kitchen. Four C-size batteries under the sink power it for several years. You turn the manual faucet handle on for water. Touch anywhere on the faucet to turn the water off. Touch again and it comes on. When I am done at the faucet, I just turn the faucet handle off manually. It took some time to get used to, but now it's quite convenient, especially when rinsing dishes.

Another factor to consider is whether you want a one-handle or two-handle control. If you

WHERE TO SHOP

The following companies offer efficient kitchen faucets:

- ▶ American Standard, 800-442-1902, www.americanstandard-us.com
- ▶ Delta Faucet, 800-345-3358, www.deltafaucet.com
- ▶ Kohler, 800-456-4537, www.kohler.com
- ▶ Moen, 800-289-6636, www.moen.com
- ▶ Price Pfister, 800-732-8238, www.pricepfister.com

are conscientious about using hot water only when necessary, a one-handle design is more efficient. It allows you to set the mixture of hot and cold water for the desired temperature and then vary the flow rate.

If you are not careful or children use a one-handle faucet, it's easy to accidentally position the handle in the middle when only cold water is really needed. In the middle position, the water feels cool, but it is actually mixing some hot water along with the cold. You might consider a less convenient two-handle design.

The faucet valve design impacts its leak-free life. The best quality faucets today use discs to control the water flow rate and temperature. You may still find a few compression style valve faucets (with washers), but they leak over time and the washers must be replaced.

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Have a question for Jim? Send inquiries to: James Dulle, Kansas Country Living, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit www.dulley.com.

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This one-handle kitchen faucet has a pullout sprayer on a 59-inch hose. It offers dual spray pattern for ease of use and functionality.