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Shower timers help families become energy efficient

Families with young children are spending more time in the shower – but that extra time is costing them up to \$100 a year on their electricity bills, according to new research from Energy Australia.

The research measured almost 2,500 showers taken over five days by more than 400 people and included surveys on what people did in the shower.

Brushing teeth, singing, playing with toys and just day dreaming are some of the reasons why young children are showering longer, while for parents relaxing, exfoliating or shaving were the reasons given for keeping the hot water running.

To help families become more energy efficient in their showering habits, EnergyAustralia is sending out 500,000 shower timers to families throughout Sydney, the Hunter and the Central Coast.

EnergyAustralia energy efficiency expert Paul Myors said electric hot water systems made up about 40% of electricity use in the home – costing families up to \$370 a year in electricity costs.

“Electric hot water systems are among the most costly and greenhouse intensive ways to heat water,” Mr Myors said.

“You use enough electricity during one minute of showering to run your television for four hours, but many families wouldn’t be aware of the cost. If an average family cut their showers by just two minutes they would save just over \$100 a year in electricity costs.”

The research showed that for families with children aged 5-12 each shower lasted for an average of eight minutes and three seconds during the week, almost one minute longer than the average shower length of seven minutes and eight seconds. They showered for an extra 36 seconds on the weekend.

It also showed that:

- 40% of children aged 5-12 brushed their teeth in the shower – almost twice the average
- 11% sung in the shower, compared to 22% of teenagers
- 21% were just thinking; and
- 16% of children aged 1-12 played with toys

“50% of young families in the survey said a shower timer would help them cut their shower time,” Mr Myors said.

“In response, we are sending shower timers in the mail to half a million families. We’re looking for simple ways to help families become energy efficient and save money on their electricity bill.

“The electric hot water system is the number one user of electricity in the home, so even a small change like cutting a minute off your shower can make a difference to your household bill. And you’re also cutting your greenhouse impact.”

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Shower Research Summary

402 people took part in the research, covering 155 households and measuring 2,355 showers over five days.

They measured their showers over the weekend and three days during the week.

It showed that 62% of people showered once a day, 29% twice a day and nine per cent showered three times a day. The average shower lasted seven minutes and eight seconds during the week, and seven minutes and 44 seconds on the weekend.

Women showered longer than men - especially on the weekend – however only by a small margin.

Women showered for seven minutes and 16 seconds during the week and eight minutes and five seconds on the weekend.

Men showered for an average of six minutes and 59 seconds during the week and seven minutes and 20 seconds on the weekend.

People aged 5-12 showered for eight minutes and three seconds during the week and eight minutes and 36 seconds on the weekend.

Teenagers showered for seven minutes and 41 seconds during the week, while people over 40 showered for six minutes and 54 seconds.

40% of children aged 5-12 brushed their teeth in the shower, compared to 19% of teenagers and 23% overall.

Each day, three per cent of people shaved their legs and underarms in the shower, while nine per cent shaved their face in the shower.

The more activities you do in the shower – apart from washing your body – the longer it takes to shower. The following table shows the time added to showering for each extra activity:

