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## WWF'S WEDNESDAY WATER FILE

# LIVING THE WATER-LESS LIFE

14 March 2018

**Looking back to our very first Wednesday Water File the message was “the only thing that can really push out Day Zero is if YOU and I use less water and save water NOW”! Most Capetonians have done their part to keep Day Zero at bay. Now what, you may ask? Well, let’s stick it out for the long term and continue to save water while there is water to save. This week’s Water File focuses on dry options that have worked well to reduce water consumption during the drought.**

### **1. How do I stay clean without using too much water?**

New bathing and washing habits are required to adapt to the “new normal”. It’s inspiring to see how efficient and innovative we have become within a short space of time. To keep our bodies clean, we should continue to take occasional on/off showers and alternate this with having a sponge bath or splash bath. You can also use a squeeze bottle or spray for a “spritz shower” to make an extreme water saving. Alternatively, you could share a small amount of bath water with your family members, as well as using it to wash your underwear and socks. Each family member can take turns choosing their preferred bathing order. Make it a family affair!

You can also prepare a combo spray of shower gel and water to lather your body before even switching the tap on to rinse. You can do the same for hand washing especially if your skin is sensitive to the waterless hand cleansing products available.

For completely waterless body cleaning, an innovative home-grown dry hygiene solution is the **DryBath® cleaning gel**, invented by a young South African entrepreneur called **Ludwick Marishane** (pictured above). The gel can be used to remove dirt and full body odour in under five minutes.

### **2. How do I keep my clothes fresh?**

Staying nifty with minimal effort is totally possible. Refresh and re-wear is the new wash and wear. Air drying clothes after wearing them reduces laundry loads and saves water. Hanging directly after wearing also avoids crumples and creases, which also means less ironing. Less frequent washing and ironing also help preserve the quality of school uniforms, delicate fabrics and your favourite items.

One way to freshen clothes is to use baking soda which is available at any supermarket. You do this by putting dirty clothes into a bag with half a cup of baking soda, shaking it around a bit and then leaving for 10 minutes before dusting your clothes off. Voila, your clothes will smell fresher. There are many other cheap ways and substitutes for baking soda – such as lemon juice and vinegar – that can be used to deodorise and spray clothes.

### **3. How can I cut back on the amount of laundry we have?**

With washing machines using between 50 and 150 litres per load, we need to reconsider and reduce our laundry loads. For example, your favourite denim items don’t need to be washed every week. Once your personal washing needs are reduced, combine the things that need washing with friends or family to create a combined wash so that you run a full machine less frequently.

Hanging bed linen outside once a week also helps to freshen it up and shake out accumulated dust, hair and skin cells without adding to the washing load. Wash just your pillow case and air dry the rest.

If you have a washing machine or use a laundromat service, do also take time to get to know your options, such as finding the cycle which uses the least water (it might not always be the eco cycle in some models) and know how to control the functions. For example, you can skip the default rinse cycle after every wash and shoot straight to the spin cycle to save water. For heavily soiled items, such as children’s clothes, consider soaking in a pre-mix of soap powder and water before adding to the washing machine. When buying new items, choose easy care fabrics and colours less likely to show up dirt.

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## 4. What about washing up in the kitchen?

It is possible to use ZERO litres of water for household cleaning with waterless and eco cleaning products. Many homeowners are water-shedding by using everyday food products such as vinegar and lemon juice to clean kitchen surfaces and deodorise. Re-using glasses, mugs and kitchen utensils as well as reducing the amount of clean dishes used saves water. Also, with fewer utensils used in food prep, there's less dishwashing which also saves time. You can also use less soap and detergent to save on rinsing water (this also applies to laundry).

With the washing of dishes taking up to nine litres of our precious daily allocation of drinking water, we need a change in our dishwashing culture. Let's start with scraping and wiping off plates before washing. A small amount of boiling water can be used to loosen and soften food stuck on plates, and this water can be re-used and re-poured onto other dishes that also need to soak. Keep moving such water between dishes that need to soak, and be sure to transfer it to a bucket to use for future flushing. Do the same with any sink and rinsing water. You can also create a dishwashing soap-water mixture to spray and wipe dishes instead of washing and rinsing them separately. We also need to group our dishes together to aim for one sink wash per day or one dishwasher load a day (on eco cycle).

## 5. How can I use less water when cooking?

Home-cooked meals are the way to go because they are healthier, cheaper and consume less water than eating out. The best water-saving methods with home cooking are to make one-pot or open-pan meals rather than cooking in multiple pots at a time. This way you still get your "buffet-style" dinners but with using less water and fewer cooking utensils resulting in less washing afterwards. Cooking in bulk and freezing the food is also worth considering. Braais are always the perfect excuse to bring everyone together but, for quieter days, grills and slow cookers make nutritious meals with less water.

## 6. How do I ensure the best toilet hygiene?

The biggest realisation from this drought is that we can no longer afford to flush away perfectly good drinking water with every pee. However, with more efficient water saving in our daily lives, greywater also becomes less available for re-using to flush. We need to realise that we can save and re-use every drop that we use elsewhere. So shower water can be used to mop, then to flush. Dish washing water can be used to wash, then to flush. We should also catch the water from rinsing our pasta and rice and any veggie cooking water too.

We could explore a couple of solutions; one is opting for longer-term dry sanitation options such as composting toilets and similar products covered in our Wednesday Water File on dry sanitation. Alternatively, you can invest in microbial flushing products to reduce the number of flushes as well as reduce odour (e.g. Wee Pong). Such products are relatively easy to find with a range of prices to suit your needs.

Lastly, bleach has always been trusted for household cleaning and eliminating odours. Some people have taken to using their dying gardens as urinals.

## 7. Can you suggest anything for keeping my car clean?

You can still keep your car clean without making a splash. Use reliable waterless car care products or greywater to wash your car at home.

## 8. Tell me more about all the uses for grey water...

No water should leave our homes after a single use, and we can often also give our greywater a second or third life too. We all need to change our relationship with greywater if we haven't already. Greywater affords us mopping of floors, watering plants, cleaning cars and lastly flushing of loos.

## DAY ZERO PREP - THIS WEEK'S BUCKET LIST:

- **Keep up the CONSERVATION CONVERSATION – now is NOT the time to get complacent. Could your workplace be doing more? What is your school doing to save water? Are you still irrigating sports fields – talk to your school about converting to a sand court.**
- **Does any of your rainwater harvesting, borehole or other systems/infrastructure need MAINTENANCE? If not, does your neighbour need a hand? Can they afford an upgrade?**
- **Go beyond your 90-second shower and CHALLENGE yourself with a dry bath, a dirty car and a dry lawn.**

### Useful links:

- Keep in touch with other water heroes
  - More water saving ways
  - Find out more about DryBath®
    - Drought hints and tips
  - Sand courts in the neighbourhood
    - Bottle spray shower