

OTTAWA PRO PLUMBING

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# Plumbing Maintenance

Preventive maintenance, winterizing, and seasonal plumbing care

3 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

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## Q1

### What is the lifespan of plumbing fixtures?

**Most plumbing fixtures last 15-20 years with proper maintenance, though quality and usage patterns significantly impact their lifespan.** Higher-end fixtures often last longer, while heavily used fixtures in busy households may need replacement sooner.

**Toilets** are among the longest-lasting fixtures, typically functioning well for 20-30 years. The porcelain bowl and tank rarely fail, but internal components like flappers, fill valves, and flush mechanisms need replacement every 5-7 years. **Faucets and taps** generally last 15-20 years, with cartridge-style faucets often outlasting compression faucets. Kitchen faucets may wear out faster due to heavy daily use, while bathroom faucets in guest bathrooms can last decades.

**Showerheads and bathtub fixtures** typically last 15-25 years, depending on water quality. Hard water in some Ottawa areas can cause mineral buildup that shortens fixture life. **Sinks** themselves can last 30+ years - stainless steel and porcelain sinks are particularly durable, while composite materials may show wear sooner.

In Ottawa's climate, **outdoor fixtures like hose bibs** face additional stress from freeze-thaw cycles and typically need replacement every 10-15 years. Regular winterization helps extend their life. Water quality also plays a major role - homes with hard water or older galvanized supply lines may see fixtures fail sooner due to mineral deposits and corrosion.

**Signs it's time to replace fixtures** include persistent leaks that return after repairs, visible corrosion or cracks, outdated styles that hurt home value, or frequent repair needs. Upgrading to water-efficient models during replacement can reduce utility bills and may qualify for rebates through City of Ottawa programs.

For fixture replacement or to assess your plumbing's condition, Ottawa Pro Plumbing offers free consultations to help you plan maintenance and upgrades.

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## Q2

### Do I need to service my backwater valve yearly?

**Yes, backwater valves should be inspected and serviced annually** to ensure they'll function properly when you need them most. A malfunctioning backwater valve during heavy rainfall or sewer system overload could result in thousands of dollars in basement flooding damage.

**Annual maintenance involves several key steps.** A licensed plumber will remove the valve cover, inspect the flapper mechanism for debris or damage, clean out any accumulated sediment, and test that the flapper moves freely and seals completely. They'll also check that the valve housing isn't cracked and verify proper installation depth according to Ontario Building Code requirements.

**In Ottawa's climate, backwater valves face unique challenges** that make regular service even more important. Our freeze-thaw cycles can cause ground movement that affects valve alignment, while spring snowmelt and summer storms put extra stress on the city's sewer system. Many Ottawa homeowners have learned the hard way that a \$200 annual service call is much cheaper than dealing with sewer backup damage.

**Between professional services, homeowners should perform basic checks** every few months, especially before storm season. Remove the cover (when safe to do so) and visually inspect for obvious debris or damage. However, never attempt to disassemble or repair the valve yourself - improper installation can void your insurance coverage and create liability issues.

**Keep detailed service records** as many insurance companies require proof of regular maintenance to honor sewer backup claims. Schedule your annual service in early spring before Ottawa's heavy rain season begins. For reliable backwater valve maintenance in Ottawa, request a quote from Ottawa Pro Plumbing - we'll ensure your valve is ready to protect your home when you need it most.

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Q3

## How do I stop my pipes from freezing overnight?

**Turn up your heat and let faucets drip slightly** - these are your two most effective immediate actions to prevent frozen pipes tonight. Even a small trickle of moving water makes it much harder for pipes to freeze.

**Temperature management** is critical for Ottawa's winter conditions. Keep your thermostat at least 15°C (60°F) even when you're away, and never let it drop below 13°C (55°F). Open cabinet doors under sinks to let warm air circulate around pipes, especially those on exterior walls. If you have a basement, ensure it's adequately heated - many Ottawa homes lose pipes in unheated basements during cold snaps.

**Focus on vulnerable areas** where pipes are most likely to freeze. Exterior walls, crawl spaces, unheated garages, and areas near foundation walls are prime trouble spots. Wrap exposed pipes with foam insulation or even towels as a temporary measure. For pipes in cabinets, remove stored items so warm air can reach them. If you have a sump pump, ensure that area stays warm too.

**Water movement prevents freezing**, so let cold water drip from faucets connected to pipes running through unheated areas. You don't need a heavy flow - just enough to keep water moving. This is especially important for pipes on north-facing walls or in areas that don't get much heat circulation.

**Ottawa's climate requires extra precaution** during extreme cold warnings. Disconnect and drain garden hoses, and shut off exterior water valves if possible. If your home has had freezing issues before, consider having a licensed plumber install heat tape or improve insulation around problem pipes before the next cold snap.

For immediate help with frozen pipes or to discuss permanent solutions like pipe insulation upgrades, Ottawa Pro Plumbing offers emergency service throughout Ottawa's winter months.

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**Disclaimer:** This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Pro Plumbing. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority before starting any construction or renovation project. Information is current as of March 29, 2026 and may change. Visit [ottawaplumbingpro.ca](https://ottawaplumbingpro.ca) for the latest answers.