

2 Protect your system



It's always best to think before you flush, especially for owners of septic systems.



The UNflushables

Diapers, wipes, medications, feminine hygiene products, q-tips, floss, and many other items that seem flushable can clog and harm your system. Stick to flushing the 3P's: Pee, Poo, & Toilet Paper.

Human waste and toilet paper are the only things that septic system users should be flushing down the toilet. Blockages can be caused when other things that shouldn't be disposed of in a septic system, are flushed down toilets. This can include products that are marketed as "flushable" such as personal hygiene/baby wipes and tampons/applicators, and other items like paper towels, condoms, dental floss and hair. These types of items might make it down the toilet, but they can wreak havoc on your septic system, causing blockages and back ups. There are currently no regulations that control what is labelled as "flushable."

Items like wipes, diapers and feminine hygiene products are a common cause of emergency phone calls to local septic maintenance companies!



Clean Green

Make your own environmentally-friendly cleaning products and protect the beneficial bacteria in your system and our groundwater.

Some cleaning products can be harmful to your septic system and our water bodies. Septic systems are biological systems for the treatment of wastewater; the tank contains bacteria that slowly but surely digest the sludge. These bacteria are sensitive and can easily be upset by chemical products. The soil in the drainfield contains microorganisms which are also sensitive to harmful chemicals and these chemicals can pass through the soil polluting our ground and surface water. Most of the chemicals used in our homes can be replaced with neutral ingredients like baking soda and vinegar.

Find recipes for DIY cleaning products at crd.bc.ca/cleangreen.

Do Not Disturb

The drainfield needs to remain as undisturbed as possible, protect it from vehicles, heavy equipment, tree and shrub roots, overwatering and generally prevent compaction & oversaturation.

The drainfield includes the pipes that discharge your wastewater as well as the soil beneath those pipes that receives and further treats the wastewater. The drainfield is the most complicated and expensive part of the septic system to repair or replace – it is a substantial investment. Treating it right and protecting it from damage can save considerable money and protect water quality and your family's health. Remember to maintain easy access to your tank and drainfield at all times for regular inspection and pumping.



How does the soil treat wastewater?

First, soil acts as a **physical filter**: as water travels through the soil, particles are removed from the wastewater and left behind in the soil. Second, soil microbes provide **biological treatment** as they consume organic matter left behind from the soil filtration. Third, **pollutants are absorbed** due to the chemical nature of soil. Phosphorus attaches onto soil particles and bacterial and viruses are also removed in this way. Soil's ability to treat your household wastewater depends on preventing compaction so micro-organisms can receive oxygen as well as unsaturation so that water can travel slowly, allowing the chemical process to have time to occur.

Every Drop Counts

Practice water conservation so that solids can settle in the tank. One key to a healthy septic system is to minimize water use in order to keep solids well settled on the bottom of the tank. Septic Systems are designed to hold wastewater long enough to allow solids to settle to the bottom forming a sludge layer and oil and grease to float to the top forming a scum layer. This process of settling and separating achieves primary treatment. **If too much water is flowing into the septic tank, wastewater is pushed out into the drainfield before the settling and separating process has time to occur.** The pushed-out solids can cause clogged pipes and soil which is expensive to fix.

Also, older septic systems were designed when people used less water so your septic system may be under capacity by today's standards. If your septic system is older, water conservation is especially important for you.

