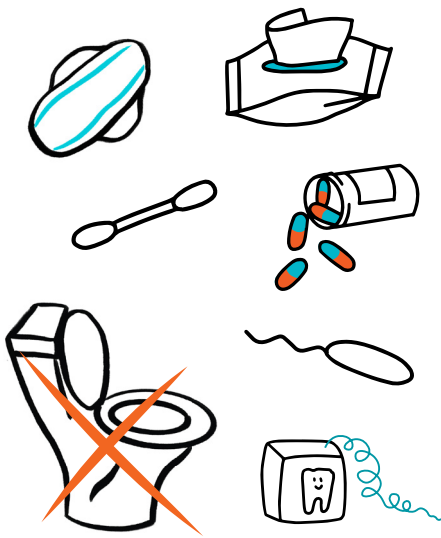


2 Protect Your System



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 3Ps: pee, poo & (toilet) paper.

Human waste and toilet paper are the only things that septic system users should be flushing down the toilet. Anything else can cause a blockage. Hygiene/baby wipes, tampons/applicators, towels, condoms, dental floss and hair might make it down the toilet, but they can wreak havoc on your septic system causing blockages and back-ups. Some products may be advertised as “flushable”, but are a common cause of emergency phone calls to 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 water bodies. Septic systems are biological systems for the treatment of wastewater — the tank contains bacteria that slowly digest the sludge. These bacteria are sensitive and can easily be upset by chemical products. The soil in the drainfield contains microorganisms that are also sensitive to harmful chemicals, which 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/shrub roots, over-watering and generally prevent it from compaction and over-saturation.

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 sensitive and expensive part of the septic system to repair or replace. Treating it right and protecting it from damage can save you 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 to soil particles and bacteria. Viruses are also removed in this way. The soil's ability to treat your household wastewater depends on preventing compaction so micro-organisms can receive oxygen. Preventing saturation is also important so water can travel slowly, allowing time for the chemical process 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 damaged soil, which is expensive to fix.

It is important to note that older septic systems were designed for less water use, so your septic system may be under capacity by today's standards. If your septic system is older, water conservation is especially important.

Learn how to conserve water at home at www.crd.bc.ca/water.

