

# Do's and Don'ts of Septic System Care

## Large On-site Sewage Systems Fact Sheet

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Caring for your community septic system can help prevent leaks, overflows, and other problems that might endanger the health of you and your neighbors. Your septic system is not a trash can. Besides human poop and pee, toilet paper, and soap used for washing, not much else should be going down your drain.

### Use Water Efficiently

Practice water conservation. By reducing the amount of water you use, you can help your septic system last longer and reduce the chance of dangerous problems.

### Take Care at the Drain

Your septic system contains living organisms that treat household waste. Pouring toxins down the drain can kill these organisms and make the system less effective.

- Avoid chemical drain openers for a clogged drain.
- Never pour cooking oil or grease down the drain
- Never pour oil-based paints, solvents, or large volumes of toxic cleaners down the drain. Even latex paint waste should be minimized.
- Eliminate or limit the use of a garbage disposal.

### Toilets Are Not Trash Cans

Flushing things that are not supposed to go into a septic system can cause issues that could endanger the health of you and your community.

#### OK TO FLUSH

- ✓ Human poop and pee
- ✓ Toilet paper
- ✓ Soap for washing

#### AVOID

- Chemical cleaners
- Food waste
- Drain decloggers
- Excess water

#### NEVER FLUSH

- Garbage
- Medicines
- Grease & cooking oil
- Household items (including towels and “flushable” wipes)

## Maintain the Area Around Your System

- Keep water runoff away from your system.
- Protect your system from damage. Keep vehicles, heavy equipment, and livestock off your septic tank, drainfield, and drainfield replacement area.
- Landscape your system properly. Grass is the best cover. Don't put concrete or plastic over your septic system. Plant trees and shrubs away from your septic tank and drainfield to keep roots from growing into your septic system.

## Don't Ignore Problems

Minor septic system issues can turn into big costly problems.

You can contact WA Department of Health at 360-236-3330 or by email at [wastewatermgmt@doh.wa.gov](mailto:wastewatermgmt@doh.wa.gov) if you have problems with your system. You can also reach out to your homeowner's association or community manager.

Some signs of system failure include:

- Water and sewage from toilets, drains, and sinks are backing up into the home.
- Standing water or damp spots near the septic tank or drainfield.
- Bad odors around the septic tank or drainfield.
- Bright green, spongy lush grass over the septic tank or drainfield, even during dry weather.

For more information visit our website at [doh.wa.gov/SepticCare](https://doh.wa.gov/SepticCare) or contact the LOSS Program at 360-236-3330 or [wastewatermgmt@doh.wa.gov](mailto:wastewatermgmt@doh.wa.gov).

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