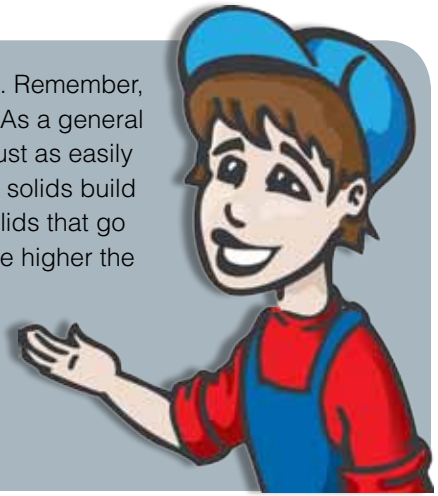


Do's and Don'ts

What you put into your septic system greatly affects its ability to do its job. Remember, your septic system contains living organisms that digest and treat waste. As a general rule of thumb, do not dispose of anything in your septic system that can just as easily be put in the trash. Your system is not designed to be a garbage can and solids build up in the septic tank that will eventually need to be pumped. The more solids that go into the tank, the more frequently the tank will need to be pumped, and the higher the risk that problems will arise.

By educating everyone in your household about what is and what isn't good for septic systems, you can save a lot of money and headaches, while prolonging the life of your system and the health of your family, property and the environment.



Installation

Do

- ✓ If you're planning an addition that adds more than 15 per cent to your home's floor area, increases the number of bedrooms, or increases the number of plumbing fixtures, you may need to enlarge your septic system.
- ✓ If you plan an addition or renovation that involves an increase in the use of your septic system and a building permit is required for the addition or renovation, the CSRD will require a stamped and signed letter from an Authorized Person stating that the existing septic system is sufficient to accommodate the increase wastewater.
- ✓ Use professional licensed onsite contractors when needed.

Don't

- ✗ Don't expand the size of your residence, add a basement suite, or start a business (e.g. daycare) without adjusting the size of your septic system.
- ✗ Don't attempt to install or repair your septic system without the involvement of a Registered Onsite Wastewater Practitioner or a Qualified Professional.
- ✗ Don't make or allow repairs to your septic system without obtaining any required permits.

Your Drainfield: It's not a parking lot!

Do

- ✓ Watch for settlement that might direct water onto the drainfield.
- ✓ Keep the area grassed to promote evaporation and avoid erosion.

Don't

- ✗ Don't allow vehicles to drive over the drainfield area or park on it.
- ✗ Don't plant any trees or shrubs on or near the bed; their roots can clog pipes.
- ✗ Don't drain downspouts, sump pumps, etc. down the septic system.
- ✗ Don't alter drainage features without consideration for impacts to the disposal field.
- ✗ Don't build over the drainfield or cover it with a hard surface such as asphalt, brick or patio stones.
- ✗ Don't excessively water the lawn over the drainfield area.
- ✗ Don't install automatic lawn sprinklers in the area.

System Maintenance

Do

- ✓ Do learn the location of your septic tank and drainfield. Keep a sketch of it handy with your maintenance record for service visits.
- ✓ Do keep your septic tank cover accessible for inspections and pumping. Install risers if necessary.
- ✓ Do have an Authorized Person design a maintenance plan for your system.
- ✓ Do have your septic system inspected annually.
- ✓ Do ensure you have an effluent filter installed on your septic tank to reduce the amount of solids leaving the tank and to increase the life of your system.
- ✓ Do have your septic tank pumped out by an ROWP approximately every three to five years, or as often as is appropriate for your system
- ✓ Do call a professional whenever you experience problems with your system, or if there are any signs of system failure.
- ✓ Do keep a detailed record of repairs, pumping, inspections, permits issued, and other maintenance activities.

Don't

- ✗ Don't access or enter a septic tank.
- ✗ Don't use septic tank additives.

Waste: Your Septic System is not a garbage can!

Do

- ✓ Dispose of solids appropriately. The only things that should be flushed down the toilet are wastewater and toilet paper.
- ✓ Dispose of chemicals and fuels at approved waste sites.
- ✓ Dispose of grease with the regular garbage. In addition, a grease interceptor between the kitchen sink and the septic tank is often recommended.
- ✓ Use household cleaners such as bleach, disinfectants, and drain and toilet bowl cleaners in moderation and only in accordance with product labels. Overuse of these products can harm your system. See list of alternative cleaners in this guide.
- ✓ Return leftover medications to your pharmacy. Also be aware that human wastes from people on medication (e.g. antibiotics) can affect the performance of your septic system and may require more frequent pumping of your tank.

Don't

- ✗ Do not put cigarette butts, paper towels, sanitary tampons, condoms, disposable diapers, anything plastic or similar non-biodegradables into a septic tank system.
- ✗ Avoid washing food scraps, coffee grinds, and other food items down the drain. Avoid using a garburator to dispose of kitchen wastes. In-sink garbage disposal units can increase sludge accumulation by 40 per cent.
- ✗ Never put oil, gasoline, paint thinners, solvents, photographic chemicals, weed or insect killers down the drain. They can poison your septic system and possibly threaten water supplies for your whole neighbourhood. Even latex paint is unhealthy for your septic system.
- ✗ Don't put cooking grease down the drains. It can solidify and clog pipes.
- ✗ Don't use chemical drain cleaners or chemical-based cleaning products.
- ✗ Don't dispose of pharmaceuticals down your drains or toilets.

Do's and Don'ts continued

Bathroom

Do

- ✓ Install water-saving toilets or install toilet dam devices to reduce water use per flush. Low-flush toilets use 1.6 gallons per flush compared to the three to five gallons used by conventional toilets.
- ✓ Reduce the number of times you flush your toilet with multiple uses before flushing.
- ✓ Install water-saving features in faucets and shower heads. These devices can reduce water use by up to 50 per cent.
- ✓ Fix all leaking faucets and toilets immediately. A toilet that continues to run after flushing could be wasting 20-40 litres per hour – enough water to fill a swimming pool in a year. Leaks can cost you up to \$240 per year.
- ✓ Take shorter showers. Shortening your shower time to 5 minutes or less can save up to 40 litres of water each time you shower.

Don't

- ✗ Don't let taps flow unnecessarily.
- ✗ Do not let the water run while washing hands, shaving or brushing your teeth. You can save up to 22 litres of water per use!

Kitchen Sink

Do

- ✓ Compost kitchen wastes (organic matter) instead of using a garburator.
- ✓ Scrape dishes into the garbage instead of the sink.
- ✓ Use a drain catcher to stop food bits from going down the drain.

Laundry

Do

- ✓ Buying a new washing machine? Look for appliances that display the Energy Star symbol. Newer energy-efficient clothes washers use 50 percent less water than a standard model. Side-loading machines use up to 40% less water than top-loading machines
- ✓ Run washing machines and dish washers only with full loads. Alternatively, select the proper load size for your washing machine. Washing small loads of laundry with large quantities of water is a waste of both water and energy.
- ✓ Spread water loading. Instead of washing four loads of laundry in one day, do one or two loads a day. If you're expecting a large crowd, reduce water use for a few days before the guests arrive.
- ✓ Cool hot tub water and drain onto turf or landscaped areas of your property well away from the septic tank, drainfield and house in accordance with local regulations.

Don't

- ✗ Avoid caustic drain openers and cleaners.
- ✗ Avoid water softeners. Some needlessly pump hundreds of gallons of water into the septic system all at once. Water softeners also remove hardness by using a salt to initiate an ion exchange. The backwash to regenerate the softener flushes pounds of this used salt into the septic system. Studies have shown that water softener brine regeneration wastes not only harm the bacteria in the wastewater treatment system, they can also cause the septic tank itself to discharge greater concentrations of solids, grease, and oil into the dispersal field.