

COMMON SENSE SEWER TIPS

Ann Arbor's sanitary sewer system includes all the infrastructure (sewer pipes, lift stations, manholes) that are designed to carry municipal sewage to the wastewater treatment plant.

Proper use of the sanitary sewer by **all residents** is important for maintaining an efficient and functional system. Clogs and sewer overflows, most often caused by the flushing or dumping of unauthorized materials into toilets and drains, increase maintenance costs for everyone. Fortunately, most clogs and sewer overflows are 100% preventable.

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP

1) Don't RUSH to FLUSH.

Three materials can safely be flushed down your toilet: **human waste, wastewater, and toilet paper.**

Other items can clog sewer lines, causing the system to back up or overflow, and can damage system machinery. Dispose of such items in the trash.

DO NOT flush these items:

- Diapers
- Baby or cleaning wipes*
- Paper towels
- Tissues
- Rags and towels
- Cotton swabs
- Syringes
- Food or food wrappers
- Clothing labels
- Cleaning sponges
- Toys
- Aquarium gravel
- Kitty litter*
- Rubber items such as latex gloves
- Cigarette butts
- Feminine products
- Hair
- Underwear
- Disposable toilet brushes

* Even if the label reads "flushable," you are still safer and more environmentally correct to place these items in the trash.

What about medications?

A growing body of research indicates increasing amounts of prescription drugs and personal care products (PPCPs) are being detected in U.S. rivers, waterways and groundwater. Drinking water and wastewater treatment facilities are not designed to filter out these substances.

DO NOT FLUSH MEDICATIONS!

Dispose of medications properly:

- Take them to a designated collection location. Check out [Washtenaw County's Pharmaceutical Take Back Program](#) for a list of local pharmacies that will accept and properly dispose of medications.
- Put them in your household trash. It is recommended that you take precautions to conceal medications in your trash, either by mixing the contents with an undesirable substance or hiding it in another container. Find disposal tips at www.dontflushdrugs.org.

2) Focus on FOG: Fat, Oil, Grease.

FOG is the most common cause of sewer backups. Grease hardens as it cools and clings to the walls of sewer pipes, creating a blockage (similar to a clogged artery). Garbage disposals do not prevent grease from building up in plumbing, nor do hot water or dish detergents dissolve grease.

Sources of FOG

- Meat fats
- Lard
- Cooking Oil
- Butter
- Margarine
- Shortening
- Food scraps
- Baking goods
- Sauces
- Dairy products



Sewer pipe clogged with grease

Preventing clogs from FOG

- Collect grease in a container; let it solidify and dispose of it in the trash. Restaurant quantities of used cooking oil should be recycled using contracted collection services.
- Scrape food scraps into the garbage.
- Wipe out greasy pots and pans with a paper towel.
- Use the garbage disposal sparingly.
- **NEVER** pour fats, oils, and grease from cooking down the drain.

3) Beware of tree roots.

- Tree roots can penetrate and clog sewer pipes.
- Avoid planting trees near your home's lateral sewer line.
- Call Miss DIG at 1-800-482-7171 to have your utility lines marked prior to planting trees.



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