
DEFEND ★ ★ ★ YOUR ★ ★ ★ DRAINS



TRASH IT



DISPOSE RESPONSIBLY

Defend your drains! Many products don't belong in your drains (meaning your kitchen drain, toilet drain, bathtub drain, or any other household drain). These products range from wipes to dental floss and medicines to cleaning products. Wipes, paper towels, and other items that don't break down in water can clog your pipes, resulting in sewer backups and expensive repairs. Fats, oils, and grease can solidify, which can cause clogs. Putting items such as paint or large amounts of cleaning chemicals down the drain can also damage your pipes and negatively impact our water quality. Defend your drains, defend your pipes, and defend your environment by using proper disposal methods.

Trash It

Wipes and cleaning cloths, paper towels, feminine hygiene products, and personal care items—these common household items don't break down in the sewer pipes of your home or on the way to the wastewater treatment plant. So what happens when you flush them down the toilet or drain? Since they don't break down, they can tangle and clump together. This can clog pipes and cause sewage to back up into your home or neighborhood. Even items labeled "flushable" can clog sewer pipes. Defend your drains by disposing of these products in the trash (where they belong) before they cause unpleasant and expensive problems.

YOU KNOW THAT YOUR TOILET ISN'T A TRASH CAN. FLUSH WISELY.



Wipes

Wipes and cleaning cloths are designed to be stronger than facial tissue or toilet tissue, so they don't break down in water. This includes baby wipes, bathroom wipes, facial or cosmetic wipes, personal hygiene wipes, disinfecting wipes, floor cleaning or dusting wipes, and toilet bowl scrub pads. Even products labeled "flushable" can clog your sewer line because their plastic fibers don't break down quickly.

Defend Your Drains: Wipes should always be thrown into the trash.



Paper Towels

Paper towels are designed to be absorbent and strong, and specifically to not break down in water. They are not intended to be flushed down the toilet.

Defend Your Drains: Throw used paper towels in the trash – or switch to cloth, which can be washed and reused.



Feminine Hygiene

Feminine hygiene products, such as sanitary napkins and tampons, are made of fibers like cotton and rayon. They are designed to absorb liquids instead of breaking down like toilet paper. Flushing these products can easily result in a clogged sewer line.

Defend Your Drains: Wrap used products in toilet tissue, then put them in the trash.



Personal Care

While it's possible to flush things like dental floss, hair, cotton swabs, cotton balls, and condoms down the toilet, it's a bad idea. These items do not break down in water, and they can tangle with other items and block your sewer line. Just because something is used or dirty doesn't mean it should go down the toilet.

PREVENT PLUMBING PROBLEMS. PROTECT THE QUALITY OF OUR WATER.



Fats, Oils, and Grease

Fats, oils, and grease will harden in your pipes or the city sewer lines. This could cause a sewer backup in either your home or neighborhood. Fats, oils, and grease come from meats, butter, lard, food scraps, sauces, dressings, dairy products, and cooking oil. And, yes, gravy can cause problems too. Even hot, soapy water won't move these substances very far through the pipes before they start to solidify.

Defend Your Drains:

- Never pour oils or grease down the drain or garbage disposal.
- Compost what you can, then scrape food, oils, grease, and sauces – yes, even gravy – into the trash.
- Recycle your used cooking oil! To find a drop-off location near you, check out the [drop-off locator map](#) or check your city's services webpage. The recycled oil may be used to create biodiesel or electricity.



Medicines

If you put medicines such as prescription pharmaceuticals and over-the-counter medications (for example, antibiotics, antidepressants, vitamins, cough syrup, or pain medications) down the drain or into the toilet, they end up in the water supply because water treatment processes can't completely remove them.

Defend Your Drains:

Trash or take back programs



Cleaning Products

While it's OK for small amounts of household chemicals to go down the drain – no more than about a cup – large amounts of these chemicals should not be disposed of by way of your household plumbing. Bleach, disinfectants, and other household cleaners are difficult to extract from water, and chemicals can be harmful to workers and the environment.

Defend Your Drains: When getting rid of these products, take them to a [hazardous waste collection center](#) for proper disposal. (Check with your city to find out if they offer other services, such as curbside pickup.)



Paint and Pesticides

Leftover paint, insecticides, herbicides, fertilizer, and paint remover can be hazardous, and they should not be disposed of by way of your household plumbing. These chemicals are difficult and expensive to remove from the water and could damage your home.

Defend Your Drains:

- Oil-based paint, pesticides, and chemicals: These items are considered hazardous waste and should be carefully taken to a [hazardous waste collection center](#) for proper disposal. (Check with your city to find out if they offer other services, such as curbside pickup.)
- Latex paint: If there's only a small amount of paint in the bottom of the can, leave it in the sun to dry out, then throw it in the trash. For larger amounts of paint, purchase a paint hardener at a home improvement store for just a few dollars.
- Larger quantities of leftover paint: Look for a hardware store or nonprofit such as [Habitat for Humanity](#) or [PaintCare](#) that accepts leftover paint for reuse or recycling.

