

CARE of Your SEPTIC SYSTEM: Good to Know

Take care of your septic system and it will take care of you!

How your septic system works Your septic system *depends on bacteria*. Understanding how your system works is important. What is the difference between effluent and sludge? How does the bacteria make the system work?

[This explanation from FamilyHandyman.com is a good source to read.](#)

MAINTENANCE It is recommended to have your tank pumped (have the solids removed) every 3-4 years. Yes, it can cost \$300+ but consider the cost of replacing a failed system.

DOs and DON'Ts for living with a septic system

- **DO Minimize your water use** because all wastewater goes through your septic system. Do not overload your system because it needs *time* to treat the wastewater.
 - Spread your washing machine and dishwasher usage throughout the week
 - Take short showers
- **Use your TRASH to dispose of waste** whenever possible
- **Your toilet is not for trash**
 - Only human waste and SINGLE PLY toilet paper should be flushed
 - NO thick toilet paper – it clogs the filter and will not decompose
 - NO other paper products, including facial tissue, paper towels
 - NO diapers, feminine products, hair, dental floss, cigarette butts
 - NO medicines Alt: mix pills with dirt/coffee grounds/kitty litter and trash
 - NO cosmetics
 - NO kitty litter
 - NO chewing gum
- **Kitchen Sink NO-NOs:**
 - Garbage disposal
 - Food scraps/particles (use your trash)
 - Grease, fats and oils: wipe greasy utensils/plates with a paper towel
 - Milk/dairy products because they don't break down well
 - Dishwasher – minimize use, full loads only; use phosphate-free detergents
- **Laundry** best practices
 - Spread loads out during the week (no “laundry day”)
 - Full loads only
 - NO Fabric Softener (it kills bacteria you need). Alternative: dryer balls – better than dryer sheets)
 - NO detergents with phosphates
- **Cleaning products:** Take care not to kill the “good” bacteria essential for a healthy septic
 - NO bleach
 - Drain cleaners (alt: use a drain snake or an enzymatic and bacterial-made degreaser)
 - Toilet bowl cleaners Alt: white vinegar and baking soda [SAFE toilet bowl cleaners](#)
 - Antibacterial soaps
 - Disinfectants
 - Recommendations for [GREEN cleaning products](#)
- **Protect your Leach field/drain field**
 - Do not drive or park on your leach field
 - Avoid planting trees/shrubs close to your leach field
- **Use your TRASH** instead of putting waste down the sink/toilet