



Know what should go down the drain that is sewer safe

It's simple, the toilet is only meant to flush the three P's—pee, poop and paper.

Human waste and toilet paper should be the only thing going down the toilet. Unfortunately, over the years, people have turned the toilet into a trash can. From medications and sanitary products to deceased pet fish and cigarette butts, if it fits, people flush it. Flushing these types of items down the toilet causes home pipes to clog, wastes water (up to 5 gallons of water every time you flush) and most importantly can have a huge impact on our sewers and not to mention our ocean. Below is a list of items that people commonly flush that should not be going down the toilet:

Sanitary Products, Paper Towels, Diapers, Baby Wipes and Facial Tissues—are made of materials that don't break down and can cause pipes to clog. The trash is the place for these items.

Prescription Drugs, Over-The-Counter Medications—contain chemicals that you don't want entering the wastewater supply. Keep in mind that sewage is treated and recycled, so we want to keep our wastewater as chemical-free as possible. Our wastewater treatment plants were not designed to remove chemicals from the water. The best way to dispose of items like these is to make them undesirable, such as crushing them and then mixing with coffee grounds, kitty litter or dirt before sealing them in a plastic bag and disposing in the trash.

Kitty Litter—(especially clay kitty litter) will sooner or later clog your pipes, even the ones that claim to be “flushable.” Far more problematic is Toxoplasmosis, a parasite found in cat waste that is harmful to marine biology. It's better to keep your cat waste out of wastewater and just put it in the trash.

Condoms and Dental Floss—both cause more problems than you'd imagine. They don't biodegrade and can cause pipes to clog.

The only thing that should be going down the drain is what comes out of the faucet.

The toilet is not the only drain that people are using to get rid of unwanted waste; people are also known to use the kitchen sink as a trash can. Since the invention of the garbage disposal, which claims to grind even the hard stuff such as small bones and fruit peels, people have turned the sink drain into a common destination for kitchen waste. Again, as long as it fits, people throw it or pour it down the drain. Letting trash flow and go down the kitchen sink (or any other drain in the house) may cause pipes to clog and can eventually lead to sewage spills that harm the environment. Here is a list of the most common things that people dump into their sinks instead of disposing of them properly:

Fats, Oils and Grease (FOG)—should never be poured down the sink or garbage disposal. FOG sticks to the interior surface of the sewer pipes, hardens over time and eventually may cause sewage to backup and lead to a sewage spill in your home or on our streets. Running hot water as you pour the grease down the drain will not help either. Many people are unaware that pouring hot water and detergent down the drain only breaks up grease temporarily. The best way to get rid of FOG is to let it cool/harden, mix it with other absorbent materials, place it in a bag or container and then throw it in the trash.

Food—should not be flushed down the sink. The best way to get rid of food is to compost what you can and wipe or scrape the remnants in the trash. Use a drain screen in your sink to catch any remaining bits of food as you wash the dishes. Use your garbage disposal sparingly. Using the drain as a dump will have unforeseen consequences of clogging sewer lines and possible backups in your home.

Coffee grounds and eggshells—should be properly disposed of in the trash. Never put them in the garbage disposal. Crushed eggshells and coffee grounds can also be used for making garden compost.

Hair—always seems to make its way past the plug. Hair will catch and stick to other items and is very difficult to get out of piping once it gets in. Keep hair from going into the pipes by using a fine drain screen to catch hair in your bathtub and shower and dispose of it properly in the trash.

Household hazardous materials—such as motor oil, pesticides, paint and solvents should never be poured down the drain. All of these are highly toxic and will cause long term damage to the environment. Dispose of these items by contacting the nearest household hazardous waste collection center where these and other household items can be dropped off. If there is just a little unused paint left, put the can in a safe place (inaccessible to children, pets, or ignition sources) and remove the lid so the remaining contents can dry out. Once the contents have dried out, replace the lid and dispose of the can in the trash or recycler.

So, let's keep our wastewater flowing and our oceans clean. Educate yourself and others. Know What 2 Flush and what to put down the drain. Protect our sewers and environment!

