

There's a pretty popular TV commercial that's been on lately for a well-known toilet maker. In the commercial, a guy sees a very pretty female plumber going into his neighbor's house to fix a problem. Obsessed with the fact that he wants this girl over to fix his pipes, he starts flushing everything he can down his toilet to clog it up. Diapers, toys, and even entire plants are flushed down the toilet. Miraculously, the thing never clogs.

Although the commercial is funny to watch, in real life, flushing all that junk down the toilet can cause some serious and expensive problems for your plumbing lines. Not to mention all the water it wastes, and the problems it could cause down at your local wastewater treatment plant. These treatment plants were designed to dispose and treat organic items only. Adding new things to the mix can cause blockages, which takes time (and money) to fix.

In order to prevent blockages, please refrain from dumping the following items down your toilet, sink, drainpipe or garbage disposal:

- produce stickers
- chunks of garbage
- disposable diapers
- feminine hygiene products
- cigarette butts
- dental floss
- paper towels
- flushable wipes
- toilet bowl scrub pads
- dryer sheets
- wash clothes
- towels
- underwear
- flushable cat litter
- rags
- condoms
- bags/wrappings and cardboard
- motor oil, transmission fluids, anti-freeze or other toxic chemicals
- solvents, paints, turpentine, nail polish, polish remover
- flammable or explosive substances
- corrosive substances that are either acidic or caustic
- needles and sharp objects
- prescription and over-the-counter medications
- small toys
- batteries

There are new products advertising softer wipes and triple layers of toilet paper and even though it may feel good to the bottom, they have become a problem in the sewer. We prefer you to use single ply because this breaks down easier in the system, however, if you use the thicker ply, please use it sparingly.

In a study published in 2002, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) collected and analyzed water samples from 139 streams in 30 states. The goal of the study was to measure concentrations of 95 wastewater-related organic chemicals in water. And guess what? One or more of these chemicals were found in 80 percent of the streams sampled. Half of the streams contained seven or more of these chemicals, and about one-third of the streams contained 10 or more of these chemicals. Pharmaceutical and personal-care products are to blame for many of the chemicals found in the USGS study. Research has shown that there can be effects on aquatic organisms like fish and frogs. Lesson here: don't flush unwanted prescriptions and try to purchase all-natural personal care products.

Another problem area comes in the kitchen. Shorewood Forest has an ordinance for all homes to have a garbage disposal. These units only shred solid material into smaller pieces and do not prevent grease from going down the drain. Grease sticks to the insides of sewer pipes (both on your property and in the streets). Over time, the grease can build up and block the entire pipe. Commercial additives, including detergents that claim to dissolve grease, may pass grease down the line and cause problems in other areas.

The Watership Environment Foundation suggests these tips to alleviate pipe blockage, and sewer overflows:

- Never pour fats, oils or grease from cooking, coffee grinds, or egg shells, down the sink drains, or into toilets.
- Scrape grease and food scraps from trays, plates, pots, pans, utensils, and grills and cooking surfaces into a can or the trash for disposal (or recycling where available).
- Put baskets/strainers in sink drains to catch food scraps and other solids, and empty the drain baskets/strainers into the trash for disposal.

Speak with your friends and neighbors about the problem of grease in the sewer system and how to keep it out.

Your sewer department has been experiencing a high volume of pump clogs due to these products.

If you have a swimming pool and backwash your pool into the sewer, it is required by IDEM that you have an air gap between your discharge and the sewer to prevent cross contamination. Please make sure that your discharge is low on chlorine as a big shock of chlorine can cause a bacteria kill at the sewer plant.

Thank you for your efforts to help us protect the environment.

Forest W. Ash
Plant operations Manager