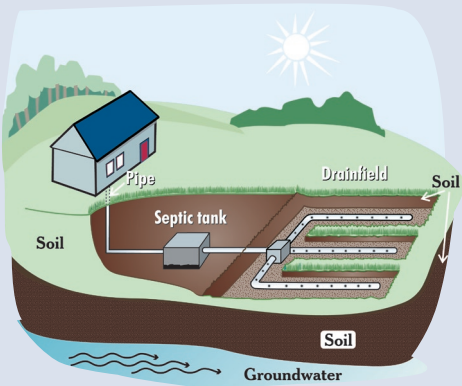


Your septic system is your responsibility!

Did you know that as a homeowner you're responsible for maintaining your septic system? Did you know that maintaining your septic system protects your investment in your home? Did you know that you should periodically inspect your system and pump out your septic tank?



If properly designed, constructed, and maintained, your septic system can provide long-term, effective treatment of household wastewater. If your septic system isn't maintained, you might need to replace it, costing you thousands of dollars. A malfunctioning system can contaminate groundwater that might be a source of drinking water. And if you sell your home, your septic system must be in good working order.



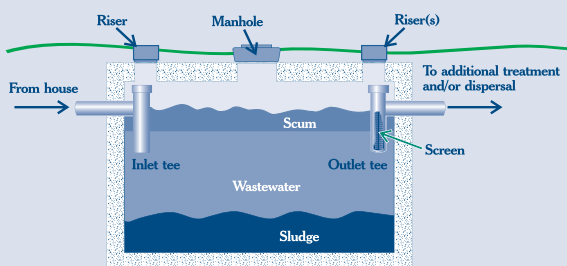
Protect Your Septic System

- 1 **Inspect your system (every 3 years) and pump your tank as necessary (generally every 3 to 5 years).**
- 2 **Use water efficiently.**
- 3 **Don't dispose of household hazardous wastes in sinks or toilets.**
- 4 **Care for your drainfield. Avoid driving or parking vehicles on your drainfield. Plant only grass over and near your drainfield to avoid damage from roots.**

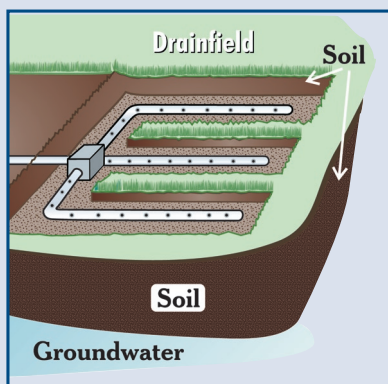
How does it work?

A typical septic system has four main components: a pipe from the home, a septic tank, a drainfield, and the soil. Microbes in the soil digest or remove most contaminants from wastewater before it eventually reaches groundwater.

The septic tank is a buried, watertight container typically made of concrete, fiberglass, or polyethylene. It holds the wastewater long enough to allow solids to settle out (forming sludge) and oil and grease to float to the surface (as scum). It also allows partial decomposition of the solid materials. Compartments and a T-shaped outlet in the septic tank prevent the sludge and scum from leaving the tank and traveling into the drainfield area. Screens are also recommended to keep solids from entering the drainfield.



The wastewater exits the septic tank and is discharged into the drainfield for further treatment by the soil.



Microorganisms in the soil provide final treatment by removing harmful bacteria, viruses, and nutrients.

How do I maintain my septic system?

Pump frequently

You should have your septic system inspected at least every 3 years by a professional and your tank pumped as necessary (generally every 3 to 5 years).

Use water efficiently

Average indoor water use in the typical single-family home is almost 70 gallons per person per day. Dripping faucets can waste about 2,000 gallons of water each year. Leaky toilets can waste as much as 200 gallons each day. The more water a household conserves, the less water enters the septic system.

Flush responsibly

Dental floss, feminine hygiene products, condoms, diapers, cotton swabs, cigarette butts, coffee grounds, cat litter, paper towels, and other kitchen and bathroom items can clog and potentially damage septic system components. Flushing

household chemicals, gasoline, oil, pesticides, antifreeze, and paint can stress or destroy the biological treatment taking place in the system or might contaminate surface waters and groundwater.

Use Water Efficiently!

- **Fill the bathtub with only as much water as you need**
- **Turn off faucets while shaving or brushing your teeth**
- **Run the dishwasher and clothes washer only when they're full**
- **Use toilets to flush sanitary waste only (not kitty litter, diapers, or other trash)**
- **Make sure all faucets are completely turned off when not in use**
- **Maintain your plumbing to eliminate leaks**
- **Install aerators in the faucets in your kitchen and bathroom**
- **Replace old dishwashers, toilets, and clothes washers with new, high-efficiency models**

For more information on water conservation, please visit www.epa.gov/owm/water-efficiency

Not in My Septic System!

X Cloggers

diapers, cat litter, cigarette filters, coffee grounds, grease, feminine hygiene products, etc.

X Killers

household chemicals, gasoline, oil, pesticides, antifreeze, paint, etc.

Systems

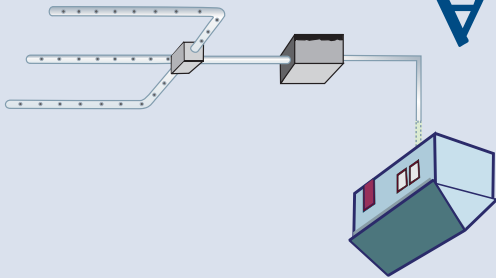
Septic

to



Homeowner's Guide

A



**Not in My
Septic System!**

X Cloggers

diapers, cat litter, cigarette
filters, coffee grounds,
grease, feminine hygiene
products, etc.

X Killers

household chemicals,
gasoline, oil, pesticides,
antifreeze, paint, etc.

**For more information, contact your local health department
or visit www.epa.gov/owm/onsite**



EPA

United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

832-B-02-006

How to treat your drainfield

- Plant only grass over and near your septic system. Roots from nearby trees or shrubs might clog and damage the drainfield.
- Don't drive or park vehicles on any part of your septic system. Doing so can compact the soil in your drainfield or damage the pipes, tank, or other septic system components.
- Keep roof drains, basement sump pump drains, and other rainwater or surface water drainage systems away from the drainfield. Flooding the drainfield with excessive water slows down or stops treatment processes and can cause plumbing fixtures to back up.

Other good reasons for safe treatment of sewage include preventing the spread of infection and disease and protecting water resources. Typical pollutants in household wastewater are nitrogen, phosphorus, and disease-causing bacteria and viruses. Nitrogen and phosphorus are aquatic plant nutrients that can cause unsightly algae blooms. Excessive nitrate-nitrogen in drinking water can cause pregnancy complications, as well as methemoglobinemia (also known as blue baby syndrome) in infancy. Pathogens can cause communicable diseases through direct or indirect body contact or ingestion of contaminated water or shellfish. If a septic system is working properly, it will effectively remove most of these pollutants.

A key reason to maintain your septic system is to save money! Failing septic systems are expensive to repair or replace, and poor maintenance is often the culprit. Having your septic system inspected (at least every 3 years) is a bargain when you consider the cost of replacing the entire system. Your system will need pumping every 3 to 5 years, depending on how many people live in the house and the size of the system. An unusable septic system or one in disrepair will lower your property's value and could pose a legal liability.

Why should I maintain my septic system?

If you have a septic system...

Septic systems can provide long-term, effective treatment of household wastewater if properly designed, constructed, and maintained.

Things to keep in mind:

- ✓ Inspect your system (every 1 to 3 years) and pump your tank (as necessary, generally every 5 years).
- ✓ Use water efficiently.
- ✓ Don't dispose of household hazardous wastes in sinks and toilets.
- ✓ Plant only grass over and near your septic system. Roots from nearby trees or shrubs might clog and damage the drainfield.
- ✓ Don't drive or park vehicles on any part of your septic system. Doing so can compact the soil in your drainfield or damage pipes, tank, or other septic system components.

For more information, contact:

U.S. Environmental
Protection Agency,
www.epa.gov/owm/onsite



**Not in My
Septic System!**

X Cloggers

diapers, cat litter, cigarette filters, coffee grounds, grease, feminine hygiene products, etc.

X Killers

household chemicals, gasoline, oil, pesticides, antifreeze, paint, etc.

If you're on a sanitary sewer system...

What you flush from your home affects the streams, lakes, and coastal waters in our community.

- ✓ **Don't pour household products such as cleansers, beauty products, medicine, auto fluids, paint, and lawn care products down the drain.**

Wastewater treatment facilities are designed to treat organic materials, **not hazardous chemicals.**

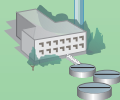
Don't put excess household grease (meat fats, cooking oil, butter and margarine, etc.), diapers, condoms, and personal hygiene products down a drain or flush them.

- ✓ These materials can clog pipes, and cause raw sewage to overflow in your home or yard, or in public areas.

Don't pour used motor oil down the drain.

Used motor oil can diminish the effectiveness of the treatment process and might allow contaminants to be discharged into local waterways.

When the wastewater flushed from your toilet or drained from your household sinks, washing machine, or dishwasher leaves your home, it flows through your community's sanitary sewer system to a wastewater treatment facility. The wastewater is treated by the wastewater treatment facility to reduce or remove pollutants.



Flush Responsibly!

For more information, contact:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,
www.epa.gov/owm

TOWN HALL MEETING

WESTFIELD ESTATES

SEPTIC SYSTEM INITIATIVE

**Does your septic system work properly?
Want to know what happens when it doesn't?**

***Learn the results of a water quality
study in YOUR neighborhood.***

**Wednesday, January 17th
Northeast Community Center
10918- $\frac{1}{2}$ Bentley Houston, TX 77093
6:30 PM - 8:00 PM**

**Representatives will be present from the
Houston-Galveston Area Council, Harris County Precinct Two,
and the Galveston Bay Estuary Program.**



Sylvia R. Garcia
Commissioner

**For more information
call 713-499-6653 or 713-924-3975**