



# Items to Avoid in Onsite Treatment Systems

Your onsite treatment system relies on microbial action to treat your wastewater. Some household products and practices can disrupt the microbial action and cause onsite systems to function poorly. Check around the house to see if you find any of these conditions. If you have any concerns about your system's performance, visit [www.septiclocator.com](http://www.septiclocator.com) and contact a service provider in your area.

## Inert Materials

Plastic, rubber, scouring pads, dental floss, condoms, kitty litter, cigarette filters, bandages, hair, mop strings, lint, rags, cloth and towels do not decompose in an onsite treatment system. Inert materials build up solids and lead to system malfunction, clogging, or increased pump-out frequency.

## Paper Products

Disposable diapers, tampons, sanitary napkins, cotton swabs, paper towels, facial tissues, baby wipes, lotioned, scented or quilted toilet tissue, and moist toilet paper do not dissolve readily in an onsite treatment system. Also, excessive amounts of toilet tissue at one time can lead to system malfunctions, clogs, or increased pump-out frequency.

## Food Wastes

Do not put animal fats and bones, grease, coffee grounds, citrus and melon rinds, corn cobs, or eggshells down the sink. Garbage disposal use should be limited to waste that cannot be scooped out and thrown in the trash. Spoiled dairy products and yeasts from home brewing or baking may interfere with microbial processes in your system.

## Cleaning Products

Antimicrobial soaps and automatic toilet disinfection tablets may kill the organisms needed to consume waste. Do not empty mop buckets containing bleach down the sink.

## Medications/Ailments

Do not flush expired medicines, as some will disrupt your treatment system and many can eventually find their way into the groundwater. If household members undergo oral or intravenous chemotherapy, the treatment system may require more frequent pump-out intervals or the use of biological additives. Contact an onsite treatment system service provider to find out if such service is needed.

## Commercial Additives

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other authorities report that there is no evidence to support the use of additives with normally functioning onsite treatment systems. Some septic tank additives can harm the system. A normally functioning system does not require additives.

## Chemicals and Toxins

The following materials will kill the microbes necessary for the biological treatment to occur: paint, paint thinner, solvents, volatile substances, drain cleaners, automotive fluids, fuels, pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, metals, disinfectants, sanitizers, bleach, floor stripping wastes, excessive use of household chemicals, and backwash from water softener regeneration.

## Laundry Practices

To avoid overloading some systems, spread out laundry over the week instead of doing it all in one day. Excessive use of detergents, especially those containing bleach, can affect system performance. Liquid detergents are recommended over powders. Fabric softener sheets are recommended over liquid softeners. Use bleach sparingly and at half the rate indicated on the container.

## Clear Water Waste

Do not plumb air conditioner discharge lines, floor drains, gutters, whole house water treatment systems, and sump pumps to your treatment system. This water does not require treatment and will overload your system. Discharge this water to a French drain or dry well in accordance with local regulations.

## More questions?

Visit [www.septiclocator.com](http://www.septiclocator.com) and find a service provider in your area.



[www.septiclocator.com](http://www.septiclocator.com)



[www.septiclocator.com](http://www.septiclocator.com)

[www.septiclocator.com](http://www.septiclocator.com) is your link to more than 5,000 businesses, professionals, and government officials who belong to the National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (NOWRA). NOWRA members have access to up-to-date training and participate in initiatives to improve the quality of onsite wastewater products, services, and regulation.



## About NOWRA

The National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (NOWRA) is the largest organization within the United States dedicated solely to educating and representing members within the onsite and decentralized industry. Our motto, "Making a Difference," evolves from our mission: "To provide leadership and promote the onsite wastewater treatment and recycling industry through education, training, communication and quality tools to support excellence in performance." NOWRA's headquarters are in Edgewater, Maryland, with constituent state groups throughout the United States. For more information about our organization, visit [www.nowra.org](http://www.nowra.org).

# SEPTIC HELP?

[septiclocator.com](http://septiclocator.com)

The best source for locating septic products, services and industry professionals in your area.

**NOWRA**  
National Onsite  
Wastewater Recycling Association

P.O. Box 1270  
Edgewater, MD 21037  
(410) 798-1697  
Toll Free: (800) 966-2942  
[www.nowra.org](http://www.nowra.org)  
[www.septiclocator.com](http://www.septiclocator.com)

**NOWRA**  
National Onsite Wastewater  
Recycling Association