

What Not to Flush



This is a sewer clog removed from a City of Bismarck sewer main. The clog was nearly 4 feet in length and consisted of non-dispersible bathroom wipes, grease, and hair.

[Don't Flush Trouble Public Service Announcement](#)

Fats, oils, and grease (FOG)

Fats, oils, and grease stick to interior surfaces of sewer pipes, harden over time, and eventually cause sewage backups. These backups can happen in your home or in our community streets. Running hot water as you pour the grease down the drain only breaks up grease temporarily and does not work to keep grease out of sewer lines long term.

A common misconception is that detergent or dish soap will prevent grease build up in sewer lines, however that is not the case. Detergent and dish soaps are not effective to break up grease and keep it from building up in the lines for long term either.

FOG should be disposed of in the trash not down sinks, garbage disposals, or toilets. The simplest way to dispose of FOG materials is to pour them into an empty can (empty coffee/soup cans work great), allow to cool until hardened, then simply throw in the trash.

[Help fight the Grease Menace!](#)

Grease scrapers are provided by the City of Bismarck Industrial Pretreatment Program and can be picked up for free at the City of Bismarck Public Works at 601 S 26th St.



Hair

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.

Bathroom



Bathroom wipes, frequently advertised as flushable, are made of materials that don't break down easily (non-dispersible) and can cause clogs in pipes. Flushable wipes, tissues, paper towels, feminine hygiene products, make-up pads, various medical materials, condoms, and dental floss are all items that should be disposed of in the trash, not down the sewer. Even if these items, or larger objects like diapers, make it to the sewer main, they can cause blockages in the sewer main and cause city sewer pumps to fail, which is bad news all around. disposed of in the trash, not down

Kitty litter products contain clay which narrows the opening of your sewer pipe and eventually it may plug your sewer pipe. Kitty litter and kitty litter products should not ever be disposed of in drains. Instead, bag the used litter and waste, then dispose of it in your waste collection bin.

Food and food waste

Food and food waste can also cause our sewer lines to be clogged and have backups. Food should not be washed down sinks and drains, nor flushed down toilets.

Using a drain screen in your sink to catch any remaining bits of food as you rinse and wash dishes, as well as using your garbage disposal sparingly, helps to reduce the amount of food waste clogging your pipes and our sewers. Using drains to dispose of food waste can clog sewer lines and possibly cause sewer backups in your home. It is not a good idea to use your garbage disposal as a substitute for the trash can. Be especially careful with pasta, potatoes, and other starchy foods. Starch and water make paste, which can plug pipes. Be even more careful with what goes down the kitchen drain if you don't have a garbage disposal.

Another way to get rid of food is to compost what you can and wipe or scrape the remnants in the trash. Coffee grounds and eggshells are good materials for garden compost or can be properly disposed of in the trash instead of putting them in the garbage disposal. Putting coffee grounds and eggshells down the garbage disposal can be harmful to sewer pipes and systems.

Sewer pipe cleaning chemicals

Use carefully and sparingly, follow label instructions closely to avoid dangerous fumes, skin and eye injury, and pipe and fixture damage. Proper care of your home sewer pipes will decrease the need for chemicals.

Household hazardous materials

Materials such as motor oil, pesticides, paint, and solvents are highly toxic and will cause long term damage to the environment. These materials should never be dumped in drains. Instead, 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.

Prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications

These contain chemicals that you don't want to enter the wastewater system. 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 are not designed to have to remove all those chemicals from the wastewater. There are other safe ways to dispose of medications. You can go to the City of Bismarck Public Works Building, or Burleigh County Public Health and pick up Deterra medication disposal bags, free of charge, or find a facility that takes back unused prescription drugs and medications.



View links for more information and locations: [Prescription Drug Take Back Program](#) or [Safe Disposal of Medications](#).



Remember - Don't Flush Trouble