

- **Don't use the toilet as a trash can.** Put paper towels, facial tissues, cigarette butts, baby wipes, kitty litter, condoms, and feminine hygiene products in the trash; not down the toilet.



DO NOT flush baby wipes, cigarette butts, tissues and other unflushable stuff!

- **Natural bacteria work just fine** in breaking down sewage. Septic tank additives have not been proven to improve performance, and chemical additives may actually harm the system or the groundwater.
- **Harsh chemicals can kill the good bacteria in your septic tank.** Don't even use more than the recommended amount of detergent!



DO NOT pour chemicals or medicines down the drain!
(Photo from YouTube video, "It's All Connected")

- **If your tank is equipped with a filter, remember to check it periodically.**

- **Direct downspouts and surface runoff away** from the absorption field to avoid over-saturation.
- **Plants with shallow roots are best** to put over the absorption field. Grass is ideal. Tree roots can clog or break pipes.
- **Don't allow the soil over the lateral field to become compacted** by driving or parking on it. Don't locate buildings, pools, or parking areas over the field.
- **The tank should be pumped and cleaned regularly** by a licensed professional. Make sure baffles are inspected and the tank checked for leaks. According to the Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Extension Service, a 1,000 gallon tank should be pumped on a regular schedule based on the number of people in the household:

Household size							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Years between pumping (for a 1,000 gal. tank)							
12.4	5.9	3.7	2.6	2.0	1.5	1.2	1.0

Are your drains running slow? Is there an odor in your yard? If you're having problems with your septic system, call your local health department. Site visits are **free** and many times health department personnel can help by offering do-it-yourself tips.

And although this may seem obvious, **know where your septic system is located.** The Harrison County Health Department has drawings showing septic system locations for homes built or upgraded since 1975.

Contact us at 738-3237 with any questions.

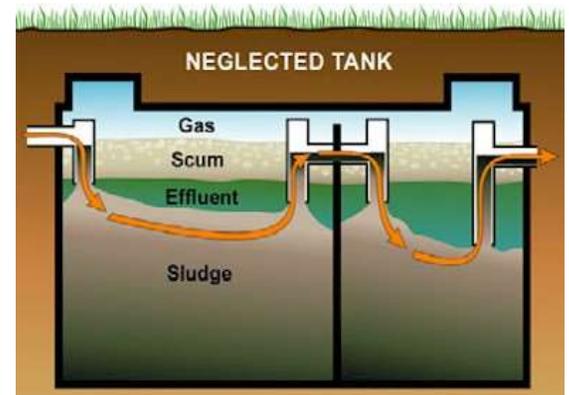
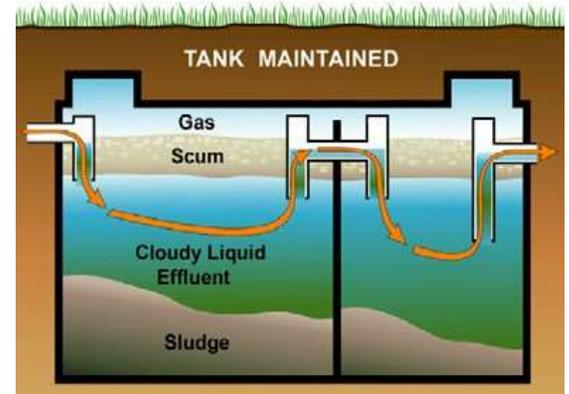
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How to Keep Your Septic System Working Like New



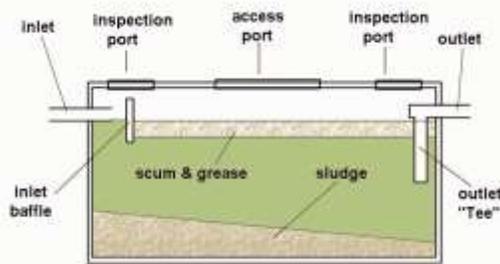
What is a Septic System?

A septic system consists of a large, watertight tank that receives wastewater from the home plumbing system. The tank is followed by an underground distribution box which is connected to solid and perforated pipe. The partially treated waste water is distributed to the soil for final treatment and disposal through these pipes.

How Does it Work?

Wastewater leaves the home through a pipe connected to the septic tank. Baffles or sanitary tees slow incoming waste and prevent sewage from rushing through the tank and into the lateral field.

The tank is where the real work goes on in getting household wastes ready for distribution into the drainage field. The tank has 3 levels – a bottom layer of **sludge** which consists of heavy solids; a middle layer of **liquid** which consists of dissolved materials such as detergents and small amounts of suspended particles; and an upper layer of **scum** made up of solids that float, such as grease and hair.



Solids and scum in the tank are digested by bacteria that live in the absence of oxygen. These little fellows liquefy up to 50% of the solids and scum. The liquid is then carried out to the absorption field and the undigested materials remain in the tank as sludge. Every time raw sewage enters the tank, an equal amount of fluid is forced out. The liquids

leaving the tank may still contain small amounts of suspended and dissolved matter, including organisms that can cause disease. These liquids leach out through holes in the lateral lines, and bacteria in the soil continue the breakdown process.

Septic systems usually fail in one of two ways.

1. **when the drainage field becomes saturated from over-use** (or from an excess of ground water or surface water), and/or,



Over-saturated drain field (Photo from www.DennisDiffley.com)

2. **when the tank contains too much solid material which can get into the lateral lines and clog them.**



Lateral line clogged with solids
(Photo from www.KingCounty.gov)

As far as good septic maintenance goes, the two most important factors are:

1. **don't overload the system by using too much water.** Typical systems can only process about 300 gallons of water per day.
2. **have the tank pumped** of solids on a regular basis.



Have the solids removed from your tank as recommended

How Can I Help My Septic System?

- **Spread your laundry out over several days.** Just one load of laundry can dump 40-60 gallons of water into your lateral field in a short period of time. Five loads of laundry in one day will max out your lateral field!
- **Don't use a garbage disposal and don't dump coffee grounds or other kitchen waste down the drain.** The more solids that enter the tank, the more often it must be pumped out. Fats and oils will also clog the system; never pour them down the drain.