



# Septic Safe

## Fact Sheet 4



## Care and maintenance of your on-site sewage management system

### Products that affect your system

- Bleach, bleach based products, whiteners, nappy soakers and spot removers - Don't put them into your septic tank or aerated wastewater treatment system via the sink, washing machine or toilet. Dispose these products on an unused area of your garden, well away from any absorption trench.
- Hygiene products, condoms, tampons, sanitary napkins, disposable nappies and cotton buds - Don't put these items down the toilet, dispose safely, into the rubbish bin in sealed plastic bags.
- Disinfectants and detergents - Don't use more than the recommended amounts, try to use detergents with a low phosphorus or biodegradable products.

### Water Usage

Reducing water usage will lessen the likelihood of problems with the septic system. The system is unable to effectively cope with large amounts of water such as numerous consecutive showers or loads of washing carried out in a short period. Try to spread out your washing and showers throughout the day and week. Reducing water usage and planning when showers and washing are done will help keep your septic system functioning efficiently for years to come.

- Showers use 10-30 litres per minute, 200 litres in 10 minutes. Try using water saving heads or flow restrictors.
- Baths use an average of 120 litres.
- Toilets may use up to 11 litres per flush. Installing a dual flush system or low flush system saves water.
- Washing Machines may use 100-200 litres per load. Fully load your machine and if possible use the suds saver option as some types of washing machines and dishwashers use less water than others. Consider purchasing a front loading washing machine. Use low phosphorus detergents and recommended amounts.
- Leaking taps can contribute up to 5 litres per hour.
- Dishwashers use approximately 50 litres per cycle. Use low or no phosphorus detergents and don't use the washer until there is a full load.
- Try to spread the washing and showers throughout the day and week.
- When buying new appliances that use water, look for the 'AAA' rating which indicates reduced water usage.

### Conclusion



### Water Usage Facts



High volumes of water introduced into the on-site sewage management systems reduce the effectiveness of treatment and may contribute to premature failure of the land application area necessitating costly repairs or replacement. Attention to water conservation will pay long term dividends.



### TROUBLE SHOOTING SEPTIC SMELLS

<b>Is the grease trap full or blocked?</b>	Yes	Clean and re-check for smells/blockage later.
	No	Problems may be within your septic tank - contact your plumber.
<b>Is the absorption trench wet or soggy?</b>	Yes	Check for increase in water usage - reduce.
	No	Problem may be with your septic tank or grease trap.
<b>Is there any surface water around the absorption trench?</b>	Yes	Check for any increase in water usage and/or upstream surface water infiltration.
	No	Problem with septic tank or grease trap.
<b>Has there been recent heavy rain?</b>	Yes	Divert stormwater away from the absorption area by building an earth bank or grassed swale (but do not divert into your neighbouring property).
	No	Contact your plumber - your trenches may need to be replaced. Desludging the septic tank provides only a temporary solution.
<b>Is there water flowing from the absorption trench?</b>	Yes	Contact your plumber - your trenches may need to be replaced. Desludging your tank provides only a temporary solution.
	No	If the problem is not listed here contact your plumber.

### Further Information

Environment and Health Division

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