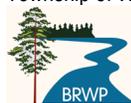


Septic System Do's and Don'ts

For a healthy, durable septic system

Presented by the Bonnechere River Watershed Project in partnership with the Township of Whitewater Region



Do these things:

- do** find the location of your septic tank and leaching bed
- do** keep a system diagram in a safe place for reference
- do** divert surface water away from your leaching bed
- do** pump out your tank every three years
- do** repair leaky plumbing fixtures
- do** conserve water to reduce the amount of wastewater that must be treated
- do** use chlorine-free cleaning products, where possible
- do** replace old toilets with low-flush models
- do** keep lint out of your septic system by installing a lint filter on your washing machine
- do** make sure the tank access lid is secure; replace if damaged
- do** keep accurate records of septic system maintenance and service calls

Don't do these things:

- don't** flush chemicals, paint, cigarette butts, sanitary products or pharmaceuticals
- don't** plant trees or shrubs on or close to the leaching bed
- don't** use special additives that claim to enhance the performance of your septic system
- don't** dig without knowing the location of your septic system
- don't** drive over your tank or leaching bed
- don't** climb into a tank - the gases and lack of oxygen can be fatal
- don't** connect rain gutters, storm drains or allow surface water to drain into a sewage system
- don't** leave interior faucets on to protect water lines during cold spells — insulate your plumbing
- don't** connect a water softener to your septic system
- don't** use a sink mounted 'garburator'

Septic system care: protect water quality and your investment

Failed septic systems at shoreline properties are a major source of pollution in lakes and rivers. You can do your part to help protect water quality by caring for your septic system.

Septic systems cost a lot of money, from a few thousand to tens of thousands of dollars, depending on the site. If cared for properly, a septic system can last more than twenty years. But if mistreated, it could fail in less than half that time.

What not to put down the drain

Never: Paints, solvents, thinners, nail polish remover, diapers, tampons, condoms, paper towels, plastics, cigarette butts, coffee grounds, egg shells, food scraps, cat box litter; water from basement sump pumps should not go into the septic system.

Limit to the minimum possible: Cooking oils, grease and fats; anti-bacterial soaps and cleaners.

Avoid: Chlorine bleach. Instead, use oxygen bleaches containing hydrogen peroxide, sodium percarbonate or sodium perborate. Septic tank cleaners, starters or enhancers are not needed and not recommended.

Signs of a failed septic system

Regardless of its age, check for these warning signs that your septic system may be failing:

- The ground over the leaching bed is wet.
- Drains back up or take longer than usual to empty.
- You smell sewage odours in the house or yard.

Limit your water use

All the water used in the house passes through the septic system. Low volume, slow flow of water is better because it allows more time for solids to settle to the bottom of the tank. High water flows 'rinse' solids right into the leaching bed where they will clog it.

Taking care of your leaching bed

The area over the leaching bed should be grass, not trees or shrubs. Do not water the grass over the leaching bed; it needs to dry down. Do not allow runoff from eaves troughs to drain onto it. Do not drive vehicles over the bed. Do not remove snow cover in winter.