

How to Avoid Sewer Backups

The most common complaint made to the Utilities Division about the sewer system is of sewer backups. Most backups may be prevented by not flushing certain materials down toilets and sinks. The following items may cause an immediate backup, therefore, **DO NOT FLUSH THESE ITEMS.**

- Excessively large quantities of toilet paper
- Paper towels - they do not dissolve in water like toilet paper
- Feminine napkins, tampons, and plastic applicators
- Diapers
- Clothing
- Any large items which can get wedged in the pipes
- Substances which swell with water - rice, oatmeal, cereals, and fiber additives containing Psyllium
- Sponges

Although the above are materials that may cause a sewer backup immediately, some materials will gradually reduce the service quality of your sewer system and eventually lead to a sewer backup, therefore, **DO NOT FLUSH THESE ITEMS.**

- Live seeds, beans, and peas - these can sprout and begin to grow in the lines.
- Grease, fats, oils - these substances cause a wax-like buildup which reduce the diameter of pipes, clog lift station pumps, and lead to sewer backups. These materials should be containerized and disposed of with your garbage.
- Fibrous materials - cotton balls, bandages, hair, rags, paper, cigarette butts - these substances can disintegrate, releasing individual fibers which snag in the lines and actually weave ropes or tangled masses.
- Plastic, metal, or other non-soluble objects act as anchors for long fibers.

Finally, **NEVER** flush flammable liquids, toxic chemicals, hypodermic needles or other products, which may endanger public health or sewer workers.