



How to Care for Your Septic System

A septic system is your very own onsite sewage treatment facility. It's used primarily where access to a municipal sewer system is neither available nor economically practical. A septic system is out of sight and is odorless (when properly maintained).

A septic system is reasonably maintenance-free. A well-constructed, properly maintained tank could last indefinitely. However, the *leach field* (the underground area where all of the sewage drainpipes are located) will most likely require some treatment or perhaps replacement after about 15 to 20 years of service.

Following a few simple rules — like not using too much water and not depositing materials in the septic tank that bacteria can't decompose — should help to make a septic system trouble-free for many years. But don't forget that the septic tank does need to be cleaned out when too many solids build up.

Be mindful about what you and your family put into your septic system. It doesn't take much to upset the delicate biological balance within the tank. You can extend the life of a septic system by watching everything that's introduced to the system.

Divert Rainwater From the Septic Drainfield

- A soggy drainfield won't absorb and neutralize liquid waste. Plan landscaping, roof gutters and foundation drains so that excess water is diverted away from the septic drainfield.

Don't Overload the Septic Tank and Drainfield

- Check faucets and toilets for leaks; make repairs if necessary.
- Use aerators on faucets and flow reducer nozzles on showers to help lower water consumption.
- Reduce water levels for small loads of laundry.
- Wait until the dishwasher is full to run it.
- Use a displacer to reduce the amount of water needed to flush the toilet.

Keep Trees Away from the Septic System

- Discourage root damage by keeping trees at least 100 feet away from the septic system.
- Trees with very aggressive roots, such as willows, should be even farther away from the system.

The Toilet Isn't a Garbage Disposal

- Never flush cat litter, disposable diapers, sanitary napkins, tampons, paper towels, facial tissues, coffee grounds, or cigarette butts and filters. They'll clog your septic tank in less time than you might imagine.

Use Garbage Disposals Wisely

- A garbage disposal can double the amount of solids added to a septic tank.
- Choose a top-line disposal that grinds food into tiny particles that are easier for a system to digest.

Minimize Heavy Duty Cleaners

- Overuse of heavy cleaners kills beneficial bacteria in the septic tank, so solids won't break down as well.

Do Not Pour Grease Down the Drain

- Grease can clog the septic drainfield, making it impossible for soil to absorb liquids. If that happens you'll need a new drainfield.

Avoid Hazardous Chemicals

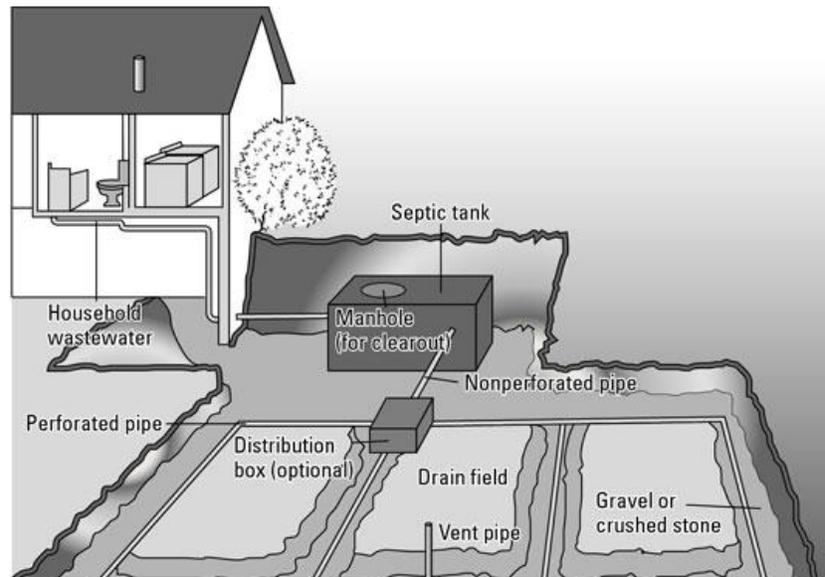
- Varnish, paint thinners, motor oils, gasoline and other similar chemicals can ruin your system and are a hazard to groundwater. Dispose of them properly.

Protect the System from Damage

- Do not drive over the drainfield, build a structure on top of it, or cover it with concrete or asphalt.
- Do plant grass on the drainfield to minimize soil erosion.

Perform Regular Maintenance

- Solids must eventually be pumped from the tank. Many experts advise a family of four with a 1,000 gallon septic tank to have the tank pumped after 3-5 years of full time use. Other experts say you can go much longer between pumping operations.
- Never attempt to open a septic tank yourself. Gases and bacteria in it are dangerous.



NOTICE: IF YOU THINK YOU MAY HAVE A PROBLEM WITH YOUR SEPTICE SYSTEM..., DO NOT WAIT TO CALL FOR HELP WITH IT. WAITING TO CALL CAN MAKE A \$300 FIX TURN INTO A \$2,000 OR MORE REPAIR WHICH THE **NEGLEGENT TENANT MAY HAVE TO PAY!**

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