

Don'ts

- ◆ Do not use your septic system like a garbage can. Do not flush materials that can clog your septic system, such as diapers, cat litter, cigarette filters, coffee grounds, feminine hygiene products, cotton swabs, dental floss and paper towels.
- ◆ The use of septic tank additives, commercial septic tank cleaners, yeast, sugar, etc, are discouraged. These products are not necessary and some may be harmful to your system.
- ◆ Do not use caustic drain openers for a clogged drain. Instead, use boiling water or a drain snake to open clogs.
- ◆ Do not flood the drainfield with excess irrigation water.
- ◆ Do not drive or park over any part of your septic system. This can compact the soil and crush your system.
- ◆ Do not pour toxic chemicals down the drain. Household chemicals, paints, gasoline, and pesticides can harm or kill the bacteria that digest and treat waste.
- ◆ Do not dump grease or fats down your kitchen drain. They can solidify, and their accumulation may contribute to blockage.
- ◆ Do not dispose of medicines, such as antibiotics in the toilet or sinks; medicines may kill the helpful bacteria in the septic tank.

For more
information contact,
Environmental Health
Services at
208-455-5400 or
www.swdh.org

You can access additional information for the following locations:

Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
<https://www.deq.idaho.gov/water-quality/wastewater/septic-systems/>

Environmental Protection Agency
<https://www.epa.gov/septic>



13307 Miami Lane, Caldwell, ID 83607

*Updated April 2019
In-house brochure created March 2009
Division of Environmental Health*

Maintaining Your Septic System: The Do's & Don'ts



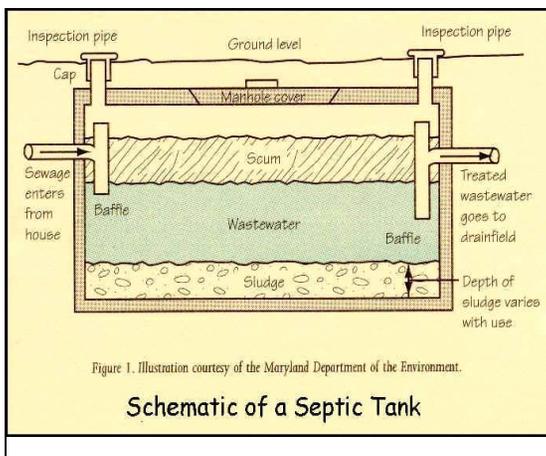
Southwest District Health

Introduction

A typical septic system has two components: a septic tank and a drainfield. The purpose of this brochure is to provide the average homeowner some insight on how their system works; but more importantly, what to do and what not to do in order to keep a well maintained subsurface sewage disposal system, to the benefit of both the homeowner and the environment.

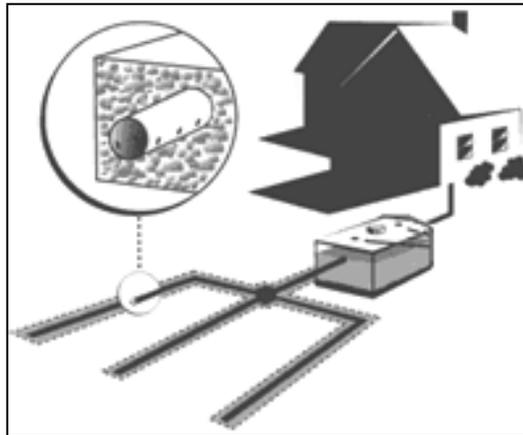
Septic Tanks

The septic tank's primary purpose is to separate the solids from the liquids and to promote partial breakdown of contaminants by microorganisms naturally present in wastewater. The solids, known as sludge, collect on the bottom of the tank, while the scum floats to the top of the liquid. The treated wastewater (effluent) exits through the outlet baffle and goes to the drainfield.



Drainfields

The drainfield contains a series of underground perforated pipes. The wastewater is distributed, from the septic tank, through the perforated pipes, exits through the holes in the pipes, and trickles through the drain rock where it is stored until absorbed by the soil. The soil acts as a natural buffer to filter out many of the harmful bacteria, viruses, and excessive nutrients, effectively treating the wastewater before it reaches groundwater.



Do's

- ✓ Use water efficiently to avoid overloading your septic system. Fix leaky faucets or toilets.
 - ✓ Consider replacing older toilets and inefficient showerheads with more efficient models.
 - ✓ Use proper load sizes when washing clothes. Try to avoid doing all the laundry in one day. This will help prevent flow surges from pushing solids into the drainfield.
 - ✓ Add an effluent filter. An effluent filter, placed in the septic tank outlet baffle or tee prevents excess solids from flowing into and clogging the drainfield.
 - ✓ Plant only grass over your septic system. Roots from nearby trees or shrubs may clog and damage the drainfield.
 - ✓ Minimize or eliminate the use of garbage disposals and water softeners. The increased demand can be detrimental to your system, biologically and chemically.
 - ✓ Obtain a copy of your septic permit from your local health district. Learn the location of your septic system. Keep a sketch of it handy with your maintenance records for service visits.
 - ✓ Conserve your replacement area. Each drainfield, when permitted, has a location where it can be replaced. Building on or too close to the installed system or replacement area can be detrimental.
- ✓ Have your septic system inspected by a qualified professional at least every three years.
 - ✓ Have the tank pumped when needed. EPA recommends pumping a 1000 gallon septic tank once every 3.7 years with households of 3 people and once every 1.5 years with households of 6 people.
 - ✓ Keep records of pumping, inspections, permits and other maintenance.