

What Not to Flush

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Avoid Drain Pain - Don't Flush These Things

Just because the package says flushable doesn't mean it's true. Many items marketed as disposable and/or flushable do not degrade like toilet paper, and they wind up clogging pipes, tangling pumps and causing messy sewer backups into streets, businesses and homes.

Our sewers are designed to dispose of very specific things. Using your toilet for disposal of many modern products can result in blockages. The drains that connect your home to the main sewer are only big enough to carry water, toilet paper and human waste. Sewer pipes are often no wider than 4 inches.

What Not to Flush

- Diapers - cloth, disposable, flushable
- Facial tissues
- Baby wipes, disinfectant wipes, moist wipes, etc.
- Toilet bowl scrub pads
- Swiffers
- Napkins - paper or cloth, paper towels
- Dental floss
- Egg shells, nutshells and coffee grounds
- Fats, oils, and greases
- Food items containing seeds and peelings
- Hair
- Sanitary napkins, tampons, condoms or any non-organic material
- Vitamins, medicines or other pharmaceuticals
- Wash cloths, towels, rags (any cloth item)
- Clothing
- Sheet plastic or plastic of any kind

So what Can I do?

- Avoid purchasing flushable items. Clean with a sponge or a rag that you can reuse.
- Use the City's food waste recycling program or compost your food waste.
- Discard hazardous materials such as used motor oil, antifreeze, etc., at the Household Hazardous Waste Facility (free of charge for Pierce County residents), 3510 South Mullen Street. For more information, call (253) 591-5418.
- If it can't be reused, recycled or composted, please place it in the garbage.

What can be flushed?

Just toilet paper and human waste. If you have questions about what is OK to flush, please call (253) 591-5588.

What about wet wipes?

If you must use a "wet wipe" product rather than just toilet paper, dispose of them in the garbage, not down the toilet. While packaging on some "flushable wipes" says the product will disintegrate like toilet paper, that generally is not accurate and these items can cause messy sewage backups into your home or neighbors' homes, local businesses or the street. If you are concerned about odors, try a lined garbage can with a well-fitting lid, a "diaper genie" style of container, wrap your wipes in pet waste bags or reused plastic grocery bags, or perhaps look into installing an after-market bidet on your toilet.

The Flushability Test

Take two bowls of water. Place toilet paper in one and place the item in question in the other. Swish both items in the water. Wait an hour, then swish again. The toilet paper should have significantly disintegrated by then, while the other item (for example, facial tissue, wipes, napkins, etc.) will likely remain intact. Unless the item disintegrates at the rate of toilet paper, it should be placed in the garbage and not down the toilet. Otherwise, you risk a blockage in your own pipes as well as clogging a pump station and causing a sewage backup for other homes and businesses.

What happens if I have a blockage?

The City is responsible for cleaning the City's pipes and they frequently clear blockages. However, homeowners are responsible for maintaining side sewers which connect from your home to the City's main lines in the streets. For more information, call (253) 591-5585.