

# Keep a Healthy Sewer Near You!

**Sewers** - you can't live without them. They've been necessary since mankind started living in towns.

Towns that didn't build them, or did a bad job of it, ended up with nasty diseases,

**or a whopping pong !**

**Sewers** are designed **to take away:** waste from hand basins and baths, **plus** toilet paper, human waste, and water flushed down the toilet.

They **also** take away water from washing clothes, people, food and cooking utensils.

**And that's all they are designed for.**

## Some useful information.

**Disposable:** If the packaging says it's "disposable", it means it can't be cleaned and re-used, so it must be thrown away in the landfill. **You must not flush it down the toilet.**

**Nothing disappears or dissolves in the drain .**

It all ends up at the Treatment Plant, intact, mixed in with everything else - unless it gets stuck along the way, and someone has to go find it and remove it.

## **What happens to things that shouldn't be in the sewers?**

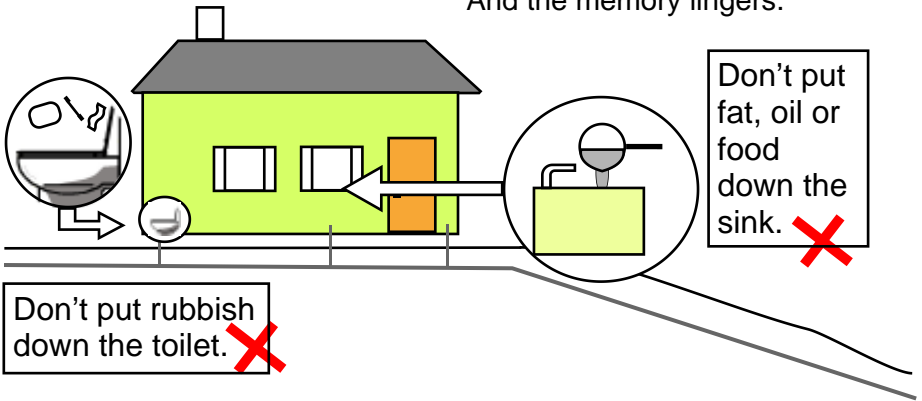
They end up at the Treatment Plant, where they are extracted and taken to the landfill on trucks. It doesn't matter whether you put them down the drain or you put them out for collection, one way or the other, they go to landfill. It's just that sending them the long way round causes blockages, and it's more expensive on the rates.

**Always "Bag it for Landfill"**

# Are you blocking up your drains?

Sewer flooding is not a pleasant subject - especially when it happens at your place. It is very traumatic. It can come out in the street, in your garden, or in your toilet.

Sorting it out takes money and time. And the memory lingers.



## The Dirty Dozen

Here are the most common causes of sewer blockages. These items and similar ones should **never** be put down the toilet, sink or drain.

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Fat, oil and grease  | 7 Needles and syringes                |
| 2 Commercial food waste  | 8 Plastic bags and wrappers           |
| 3 Disposable nappies   | 9 Old clothing and rags               |
| 4 Domestic food waste (including that from waste disposal units) | 10 Cement and building materials      |
| 5 Sanitary products  | 11 Condoms                            |
| 6 Plastic items (including bottles and bottle tops)              | 12 General household and garden waste |

# Why do the pipes block up?

The drain pipe from your house to the street has a diameter of only 100mm, the same distance across as a margarine tub.

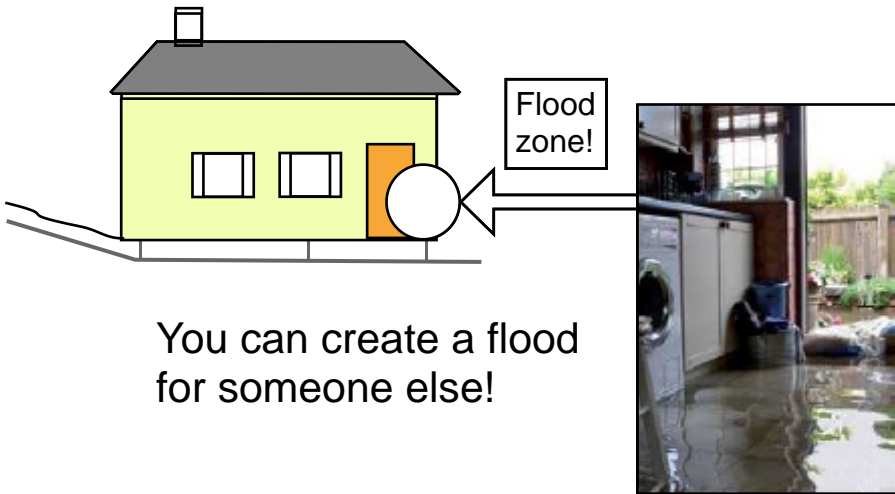
The pipe from the toilet is 80mm, and that from the kitchen sink is only 40mm.

Nothing you put down the drain dissolves there. It all ends up at the Treatment Plant, intact.

Aim to put nothing down the drains except human waste, and waste water from washing, or from preparing and eating food.

Eating the wrong things clogs your arteries. Feeding the wrong things down the drain clogs the pipes.

And not just yours. You can flood out your neighbours!



You can create a flood for someone else!

A blocked or clogged up sewer under a street will cause a backup of sewage, which will come out at the lowest exit point - a manhole in the street, a gully trap by the house, or the toilet pan itself.

**A “sewage fountain” is an unforgettable sight.**

Put sanitary waste in a bathroom bin, and add the contents to the household waste afterwards.

When you have fat and oil, wait until it is cool and pour it into a heat-proof container such as the “Fat Trap”™.

Put food scraps into a bin. Scrape food from plates into a bin. Compost non-meat scraps if you can, or bin it for landfill.

[www.needle.co.nz](http://www.needle.co.nz) advises on the disposal of needles. Used medicines go to your pharmacy.

**Be wise. Be Sewer-Wise.**

## History Notes

During the mid-1800s, Londoners started installing the “modern” flush toilets. The Great Exhibition of 1851 exhibited that modern marvel - the first public toilet.

While these were a step forward from the handy chamber-pot kept in the sideboard that most Londoners used, they dramatically increased the volume of water and waste that was now poured into existing cesspits.

These often overflowed into street drains designed to cope with only rainwater, but which now carried outfalls from factories, slaughterhouses and other activities, contaminating the city before emptying into the Thames. The water closet was “a giant step forward for personal hygiene and two steps back for public sanitation”.

Cholera had been widespread during the 1840s, partly because many people believed that disease

was due to air-borne “miasma” or “bad air”. No one then knew that the disease was water-borne. After that discovery was made by London physician Dr John Snow in 1854, sanitation reform soon became a high priority. The consolidated Metropolitan Commission of Sewers was established in 1848 to set about ridding the capital of an estimated 200,000 cesspits - an objective accelerated by the “Great Stink”.

**The Great Stink** of 1858 occurred during an unusually warm summer, when the smell of untreated sewage almost overwhelmed people in central London.

Plans started to be made for Parliament and the law courts to evacuate the city.

Heavy rain finally ended the heat and humidity, and the crisis ended.

Measures were taken to avoid it ever happening again, by building a large network of sewers.

