

Know What to Flush

Environmental Services

Capital Regional District | 2020

We often think that our wastewater treatment can handle anything we put down the drain or flush down the toilet. But when you flush things you shouldn't it makes your toilet and the sewer system work harder, and sometimes not at all.

Wastewater can't be treated when it doesn't get through the pipes to our region's treatment facilities. Flushing inappropriate items can cause costly blockages and backups in wastewater treatment systems, especially if they mix with fats, oils and grease (which also shouldn't go down the drain).

This can result in increased costs to fix regional pump stations and replace damaged equipment and infrastructure. It can also cause damage to plumbing and septic systems on your property. Homeowners could face additional costs to address sewer backups. In the community, blockages can cause overflows of raw sewage into local rivers and lakes.

This has become a bigger issue in recent years with the increased use of products marketed as "flushable." They get past the toilet, but unfortunately, they don't get much further than that. Unlike toilet paper, which has been designed to break down quickly once wet, wipes have been designed to stay together. Only the "Three Ps" (pee, poo and toilet paper) are meant to go down the toilet.

Common unflushable culprits are:

- **Wipes and other "flushable" products** – disposable wipes (baby wipes, disinfecting wipes, personal wipes) and other items marketed as "flushable" are not actually meant to be flushed.
- **Stringy things and plastic** – the stringy things you find in the bathroom, like hair and dental floss, can tie together other unflushable waste in the sewer system, creating a big mess. Plastic items like condoms, contact lenses and tampon applicators should go in the garbage, not the toilet.
- **Medication** – if you flush expired or unwanted medication it can have a negative impact on the marine environment. Medications should be returned to a pharmacy for proper disposal.

The good news is that it's not hard, time consuming or expensive to avoid clogs and blockages, you just need to know what to flush. When faced with the decision to flush or not, remember the Three Ps. Nothing else should go down the toilet.

Help keep the region's environment clean, protect your home and maintain our wastewater infrastructure. For more information visit www.crd.bc.ca/noflush.
