

Protecting Your Septic System

The homeowner is responsible for the septic tank

A household septic tank safely treats and disposes of wastewaters produced in the bathroom, kitchen, and laundry.

Septic systems are usually a permanent solution, but they must be properly used, operated, and maintained by everyone in the household.

Check and maintain

Septic systems are not maintenance free. Money that you save by not paying a monthly sewer bill should be set aside for regular inspections and maintenance.

Stop using your garbage disposal. Your sink is no longer a waste basket.

Septic tanks must be pumped out every four to six years. After three years of use, the system should be checked annually. Use a septic system service company licensed by the Arkansas Department of Health.

Don't use your sink as a wastebasket

Reduce the solids going into your septic system and you will extend the time between pumpouts.

- The best way to protect the life of your septic tank is to **stop using your garbage disposal**. Your kitchen sink is no longer a waste basket. Minimize garbage disposal use. Garbage disposals usually **double** the amount of solids flowing to the tank. Instead, throw items into a waste basket or start a compost pile in your yard.
- **Do not put items down the drain that could clog the septic tank:** fats, grease, coffee grounds, paper towels, sanitary products, diapers, and cigarette butts.
- **Do not put toxic substances down the drain:** solvents, degreasers, acids, oils, paints, pesticides. It's okay to use laundry bleach, normal household cleaning chemicals and occasionally, drain cleaners.

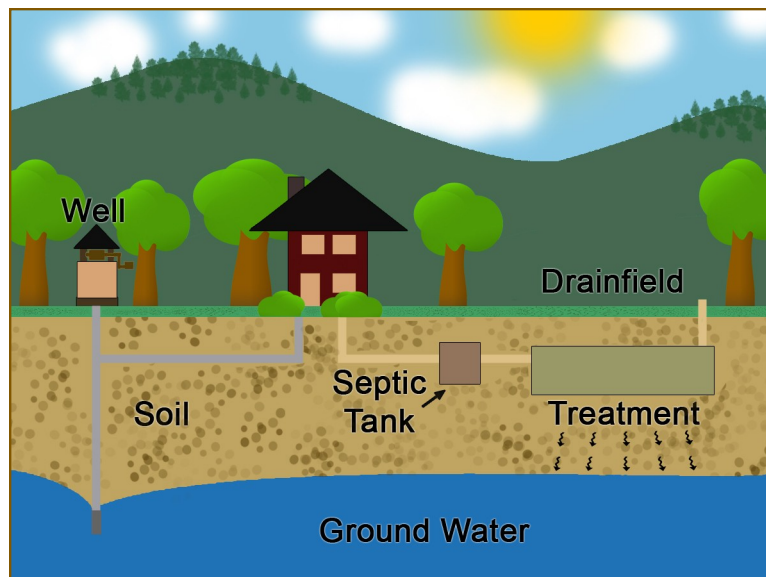
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Use less water

If you use less water in your kitchen, bathroom, or laundry, you'll send less wastewater to your septic system.

Ways to use less water include:

- Fix leaks
- Take shorter showers
- Run less water when taking a bath
- When you wash clothes, run full loads.



Keep a clear path on the soil above the septic system

Protect your system. Don't drive or park vehicles on the ground above the system. Do not install driveways, concrete surfaces, or asphalt above the tank or absorption field.

Tree roots can stop up a drain line and require the services of a plumber. Consider removing trees, or at least trim back the problem roots.

Don't waste your money on additives

Do not buy chemicals or additives to clean or "sweeten" your system. There's no

conclusive evidence that these products improve the septic system operation.

An effluent filter improves the septic tank's efficiency of solids removal. Some filters are designed to be cleaned annually, and others are large enough to be cleaned when the septic tank is pumped.

Thanks to these sources

University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service

Arkansas Department of Health

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University Cooperative Extension

**Questions about
septic systems?**
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