

Fact sheet: **Help protect our waterways**

Many items disposed of in the sewerage system are very difficult to treat and can be harmful to the environment. You can help protect the environment by being careful about what is flushed down the toilet, sink or drain.

All Western Water's wastewater purification plants are designed to treat household and industrial waste. Problems occur when people use the sink or the toilet as a rubbish bin to dispose of toxic chemicals, organic materials and non-biodegradable products such as disposable nappies and sanitary napkins.

In the bathroom

Hygiene products

Hygiene items such as disposable nappies, cotton buds, tampons, incontinence pads, condoms, sanitary napkins, pantihose and surgical bandages should not be flushed down the toilet. If these items are put into the sewerage system they can cause local blockages and spillages. Not only are sewerage blockages inconvenient for customers they are also expensive to repair. If the blockage is located within the customer's property then the customer is responsible for the cost of the repair.

Instead of flushing hygiene items down the toilet these items should be disposed of in the garbage. For soiled nappies simply empty the contents into the toilet and then put the nappy in a plastic bag and pop it into the garbage bin.

Pharmaceutical products/personal items

Avoid flushing items such as nail polish remover, perfume, and other non-biodegradable products down the toilet. The proper way to dispose of oils/lotions is to place oils in a jar and dispose of in the garbage bin.

Pharmaceutical products (medicines, tablets) should be taken to your chemist for safe disposal.

In the kitchen and laundry

Household cooking oils poured into the sink can cause sewer blockages in the system, damage the treatment plant and ultimately pollute the oceans and waterways. Instead of pouring oils down the sink let the oil or cooking fat cool. Once cooled the oil or fat can be put into the compost or the garbage bin.

Use a sink strainer to catch any food scraps before they go down the sink. You can then empty the food scraps into the bin or add the scraps to the compost. Milk products, food scraps, tea leaves and coffee grounds should also be disposed of in the compost.

Did you know that the average household uses three times more detergent than the manufacturers recommended dose? Some detergents contain phosphate, which if not removed, can cause harmful algae to bloom in our waterways.

You can help keep our waterways healthy by choosing detergents that are low in phosphate or phosphate free.

In the garden and the workshop

Don't tip down the sink or gully trap:

- Kerosene
- Poisons
- Oil-based paints
- Methylated spirits
- Pesticides
- Engine oil
- Chemicals

These products can damage and corrode water pipes and harm the environment. They can also be harmful to the health of maintenance crews who may be repairing pipes along the system.

These products should not be disposed of in the garbage either as they could also present a health risk to garbage collectors and the general public.

Instead, place the chemicals in sealed containers and contact your local council for advice as to the most appropriate disposal methods.

For further information

**Contact Western Water on 1300 650 425
or visit our website at www.westernwater.com.au**