

## HOW TO MAINTAIN YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM

### Inspect Regularly

Hire a professional to inspect your septic system at least **every three years**.

### Pump Regularly

Septic tanks should generally be **pumped every 3 to 5 years**. Alternative septic systems with electrical float switches, pumps, or mechanical components will need to be inspected more often. The professional who inspects your septic system should be able to give you a better idea as to how often you should have your septic tank pumped.

### Use water efficiently

Using water efficiently means that less water will enter your septic system. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, a single-family home uses an average of **70 gallons of water per person per day**. Dripping faucets waste some **2,000 gallons of water** each year. **Leaky toilets waste as much as 200 gallons per day**.

### Flush Responsibly

What you flush can damage your septic system. Dental floss, feminine hygiene products, condoms, diapers, cotton swabs, cigarette butts, coffee grounds, cat litter, paper towels and other kitchen and bathroom items **can clog and damage your septic system**.

### Dispose of Responsibly

Hazardous waste, chemicals, gasoline, oil, pesticides, antifreeze and paint **can stress or destroy biological processes used to break down waste in your tank**. These items can also contaminate surface and groundwater. Safely dispose of household hazardous waste and leftover chemicals by bringing them to a **S.A.F.E. Collection Center** or other **household hazardous waste collection program**.

### Take care of your Drainfield or Seepage Pit

- Do not drive or park vehicles on your **drainfield** as it can damage your pipes, tank or other

septic system components. It can also cause the soil in your drainfield to become compact so that the drainfield cannot function properly.

- Do not drive or park your vehicle **on top of your seepage pit** as it can cause the top of the pit to collapse.
- Do not plant anything other than grass over and/or near your **drainfield to avoid damage from roots**. Roots from nearby trees and shrubs can clog and damage your drainfield or seepage pit.
- Keep roof drains, basement drains, other rainwater, or surface water drainage systems **away from your drainfield and seepage pit**. Excessive water in your drainfield or seepage pit can slow down or stop treatment processes and cause your plumbing to back up.

## Not in my septic system!

### CLOGGERS

Diapers, cat litter, cigarette filters, coffee grounds, grease, feminine hygiene products, etc.

### KILLERS

Household chemicals, gasoline, oil, pesticides, antifreeze, paint, etc.



# a homeowner's guide to septic systems

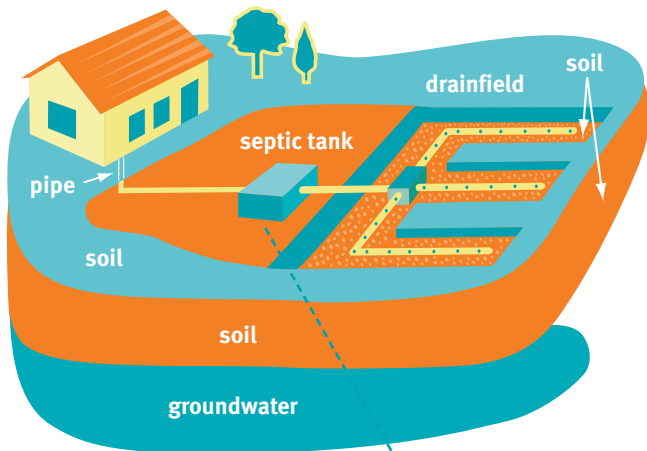


## WHAT IS A SEPTIC SYSTEM?

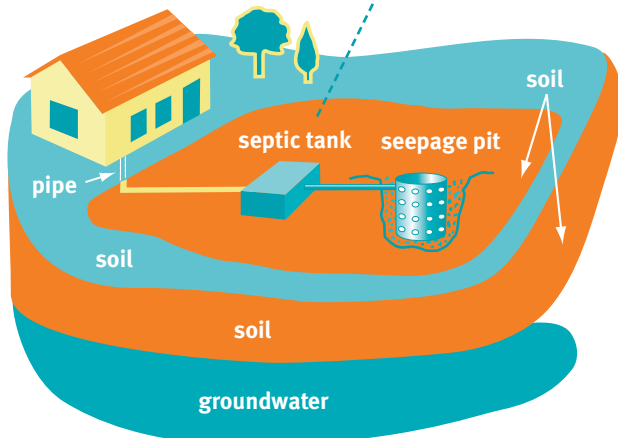
A septic system is a small-scale sewage treatment system that is **not connected to a municipal sanitary sewer system**.

A typical septic system has **four main components**: a pipe to transport wastewater from the home, a septic tank, a drainfield or seepage pit, and its surrounding soil.

*Septic system with drainfield*

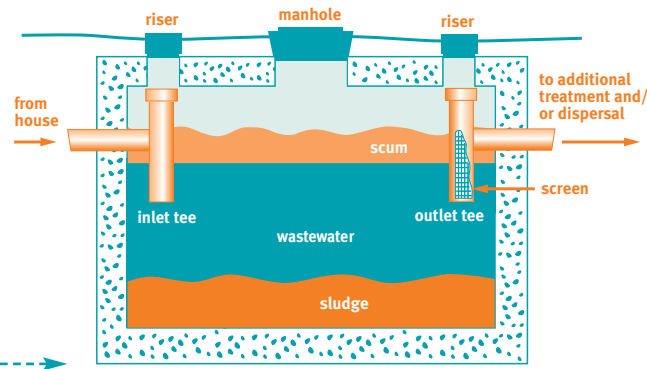


*Septic system with seepage pit*



## HOW DOES A SEPTIC SYSTEM WORK?

A pipe **transports wastewater** from toilets, baths, sinks, showers, etc. from the house to a septic tank. The septic tank, which is a buried and watertight container, holds the wastewater long enough to allow solids to settle and **form sludge**. Oil and grease floats to the surface as scum. Bacteria in the tank works to further decompose solid waste in the tank. Compartments and a T-shaped outlet in the septic tank prevent sludge and scum from escaping out into the environment or into the drainfield or seepage pit. **Another pipe moves wastewater** from the septic tank into the drainfield or to a seepage pit. Microorganisms in the surrounding soil further treat the wastewater to **remove bacteria and viruses**.



*Septic tank profile*

## MAINTAIN YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM — IT'S A WORTHWHILE INVESTMENT!

Your septic system is on your property and **belongs to you**. This means that as a homeowner or resident, you are responsible for maintaining **your own septic system**.

**Maintaining both your home and septic system will preserve and protect your investments.** A septic tank that is in disrepair or that cannot be used will lower the value of your property and expose you to legal liability. You will not be able to sell your home unless your septic tank is in good working order. When selling your home, you are required to disclose the **condition of your septic system**. If it is not working properly, you may have difficulty selling your property.

A septic system that is properly designed, constructed and maintained can provide your household with reliable, long-term service. A septic system that works properly can effectively **remove pollutants from wastewater and protect you, your family and your environment from infection and disease**. These pollutants include disease-causing bacteria, viruses and other pathogens that can cause communicable diseases through direct or indirect body contact or ingestion.

## FAILURE TO MAINTAIN YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM CAN COST YOU MORE IN THE LONG RUN.

A septic system that is not maintained or malfunctions:

- **Is expensive to repair;**
- **May need to be replaced, costing thousands of dollars;**
- **Can contaminate groundwater that could be a source of drinking water;**
- **Can spread infection and disease;**
- **May expose you to legal liability.**