

To flush, or not to flush?

Do you know what you should be flushing down
your toilet or pouring down your drains?

www.thameswater.co.uk/binit



DID YOU KNOW

75%

of sewer flooding is
due to blockages in
sewers?

Advice to keep your drains clear from nasty blockages

Thousands of people suffer the misery of blocked drains every year - a result of unsuitable products being flushed down the loo or washed down the drain.

The majority of blockages are caused by cooking fat and oil, which congeal in the sewers, forming a thick layer around the pipe. This prevents sewage from flowing and can cause

it to back up. Wet wipes and sanitary items also contribute to some of the most troublesome blockages.

Each year approximately 1,000 homes and 5,000 gardens in the Thames region flood with sewage as a result of blockages in the sewers. This could easily be avoided by people simply disposing of their rubbish and food waste in the bin.

Love your loo!

Sewers are only designed to take away water, toilet tissue and human waste.

All paper and plastic waste, such as sanitary products, nappies and wet wipes, should be wrapped up and placed in a bin. Even the smallest of items, like dental floss and cotton buds, can have a damaging effect as they collect in the filters at our sewage treatment works and can cause machinery to break down.

Although wet wipes are very useful when toilet training toddlers or removing make-up, they should be disposed of in the same way as nappies - in

the bin. Wipes do not break down like tissue, so may not get washed away down the pipe. When wipes mix with solidified fat, they set hard, forming a solid obstruction.

‘Flushable’ products?

Even items that are marketed as ‘flushable’ or ‘biodegradable’ contribute to blockages.

Although these items disappear when you flush your loo, they do not break down in the sewers, as they take a number of years to disintegrate.

**Anything
other than
human
waste or
toilet tissue
needs to go
in the bin.**

Stop and think about your sink



Fat and oil poured down the sink after cooking is most likely to block your drains.

Fat may be in liquid form when you pour it away, but it quickly cools down and becomes hard, forming a thick coating around

the inside of the pipes. When fat mixes with other items, such as wet wipes, it can form a solid obstruction, restricting the flow in the pipe and causing a blockage. The wastewater running through the pipe will then find an alternative place to flow out from, which may cause flooding.

A build-up of fat in the sewer

What happens when the pipe blocks?



Drainage pipes from your home are usually only 10cm in diameter and can easily become blocked if unsuitable items are flushed or washed down them.

Blockages in household pipes can be particularly nasty, as they stop wastewater leaving

Sewer flooding can have a devastating effect on homes

your property. If you have trouble flushing your toilet, this could be a sign of a blockage. When wastewater is unable to flow away it can come back up from the toilet or sink, flooding your home.

Public sewers either carry wastewater, rainwater, or both. A heavily blocked sewer can result in severe consequences such as manholes overflowing, resulting in pollution of watercourses and flooding to pavements, roads and - worst of all - people's homes.

What you can do to help

It's really simple

- Make sure that only water, toilet tissue and wastewater goes down your drains and into the sewer. All other items, such as sanitary products, nappies and wet wipes, should be disposed of appropriately in the bin.
- After cooking, fat and oil should be left to cool – it can then be disposed of in the bin or mixed with seeds and nuts to make a feeder for birds.
- Chemicals, solvents, engine oil and paint should be taken to a local refuse site and medicines to a pharmacist for safe disposal.

For more information about how to dispose of your products appropriately, or for advice on dealing with blockages, visit our website:

www.thameswater.co.uk/binit

**Oil, paint,
solvents and
chemicals
should be
disposed of
at your local
refuse site.**



FAT AND OIL

WET WIPES

TAMPONS

SANITARY TOWELS

NAPPIES

KITCHEN ROLL

FOOD WASTE

INCONTINENCE PRODUCTS

COLOSTOMY BAGS

COTTON WOOL / COTTON BUDS

RAZOR BLADES

TIGHTS

PLASTERS AND BANDAGES

CONDOMS

DENTAL FLOSS

MEDICINES AND TABLETS

ENGINE OIL, CHEMICALS AND PAINTS

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