



Your Septic System

You have a waste control system that removes solid and liquid waste from your toilet, bathroom, kitchen and laundry and consists of:

- A tank that holds solid waste, and
- A disposal system that discharges the liquid waste

Solids sink to the bottom of the tank and are broken down by bacteria. The liquid (called effluent) passes through the tank and into your disposal system which contains:

- A soakage trench or soakage bed which disposes of the effluent below the surface of the ground: or
- An aerobic waste water treatment system or aerobic sand filter which disposes of chlorinated effluent onto an above ground surface irrigation area.

Your Responsibilities

You must repair and replace the household drains that take the waste to your tanks when necessary by:

- Clearing blockages
- Maintaining your tank and disposal system
- Ensure the tank is pumped out (desludged) at

least once every five (5) years.

Occupants (including tenants) must ensure that no inappropriate solids or liquids go into the tank and must not alter, repair or replace any part of the tank or household drains without approval from Council. Please contact Building and Plumbing on 4776 4637 for more information.

Do's and Don'ts

Do

1. Have your tank pumped out every five (5) years unless you are having problems with blockages.
2. Annually check scum and sludge levels and also for blockages.
3. Every two months check your grease trap (if you have one) and clean it out if necessary.
4. Keep records of items 1, 2 & 3.
5. Only use disinfectants, deodorants, detergents, antiseptics or germicides that are suitable for septic tanks and in small amounts. This will help with the operation of the tank and won't kill the bacteria that breakdown the solids. Check the product label for suitability.

6. Learn the layout of your septic system and land application area to enable emptying of the tank.
7. Reduce water usage.
8. Ensure your tank is mosquito proofed.

Don't

1. So that the tank doesn't fill up quickly with solids don't put grease, fat and food scraps down the kitchen sink.
2. Don't pump waste water from your septic tank to water the lawn and garden areas as it may contain harmful substances that could affect your family's health.
3. Don't connect a storm water drain to your septic tank system— it is illegal. Make sure that roof water, rainwater tank overflow and surface water drainage water does not enter your tank, or drains, as it can overload your disposal system and can result in raw effluent seeping to ground level.
4. Don't put disposable nappies, sanitary napkins, tampons, condoms, paper towels, tissues, plastics, cat litter and cigarettes down your toilet. These can block your drains.
5. Don't put backwash water from swimming pools, spa baths/pools (in excess of 680 litres) and water softeners into your tank. It can only be discharged directly into your drain between the septic tank and your disposal system. You need council approval for connecting a backwash facility to your drain.
6. Don't put petrol or other flammable or explosive substances into the tank.
7. Don't put chemicals such as paint, varnishes, thinners, waste car oil, waste car oil, photographic solutions and pesticides down your toilet or sink as it affects the operation of the tank.
8. Don't build structures over your septic tank. Damage can be caused to the tank and result in expensive repairs. Access for maintenance and tank emptying can be hindered.

Other Hints & Tips

- If you have blocked drains make sure the plumber raises your inspection openings to ground level so you can access them easily.
- Seal tank openings to prevent mosquito breeding. Vents should be covered with 1mm fiberglass mesh.
- Avoid planting trees and shrubs near your septic tank and drains. Roots can cause expensive damage to the system.

- If you build a driveway or path over your septic tank, make sure you raise the lid of the tank and inspection points to ground level so that it can be accessed easily for emptying. A driveway or path must be engineered so that no damage occurs to the system by traffic using them.
- High water tables affect septic tank efficiency including flood events.
- Soil types especially clay soil types such as Toobanna and other places, can affect septic tank efficiency.
- Plastic (poly) septic tanks can NEVER be pumped out to empty because they will pop out of the ground if not left 1/4 to 1/3 full.
- Call a licensed plumber to clear any blockages.
- Reducing water usage can help ensure the system is not overloaded.

Emptying Septics

Tanks have to be emptied by a licensed liquid waste transporter listed in the Yellow Pages under Septic Tank Cleaning Services.

When does it need it?:

- Water is draining too slowly
- Drain pipes gurgle or make noises because air bubbles are being forced through the system
- Sewage smells
- Water backs up into your sink or bath
- Waste water is surfacing over your land application area

You need to know where the tank and access lid is so that the solids can be removed. If the lid of your tank is below ground level you must remove the grass, soil or rubble to enable access to the tank. You might find it easier to keep the access lid at ground level and clear of any obstructions to reduce the work you need to do when emptying.

Need More Information?

For further information or to log a request please contact Environmental Health Services on 4776 4607 or email hschealth@hinchinbrook.qld.gov.au.