

How to Prevent Clogged Toilets

Toilet clogs are not only messy, but they can damage flooring and plumbing pipes, leading to costly repairs. There are really only two things that should be flushed down your toilet: human waste and toilet paper. Even flushing too much of these things at a time can cause a clog to form. Knowing what not to flush, when to plunge and how to prevent unsuitable items from going down the drain are the main components to preventing toilet clogs.



Toys or other items flushed by curious kids often cause toilet clogs.

What Is and Isn't Flushable

Homeowners flush materials down toilets without realizing that they contribute to clogs. These include facial tissues, wipes, napkins, paper towels, floss, coffee grounds, hair, feminine hygiene products, grease and other fats or oils, medications, plastic and diapers. As they sit in your waste pipes, they block other material you flush down afterward, until finally a clog is formed. Sometimes it's hard to determine whether a product should be flushed or not because many baby wipes, diapers and feminine hygiene products are labeled flushable. To determine whether or not it should go into your toilet drain, fill two bowls with water. Put toilet paper in one bowl, and the item you're wondering about in the other. If you swish these around in the water and then leave them for about an hour, when you return, you'll see the difference between flushable and not flushable. Toilet paper disintegrates in water, so it easily goes down your drain and out through the waste pipes. Other items remain intact. If the material does not disintegrate in water, it is not flushable.

Proper Flushing

Sometimes clogs occur even when you only flush toilet paper and waste down your drain. This is often caused by flushing too much of this material or by curious kids sneaking into the bathroom and dropping toys or other materials in. To prevent clogs, you should flush only as much toilet paper as is necessary. Do not flush large wads with one flush. These large amounts ball up so that only the outer portion dissolves, and waste and toilet paper that go down after this will build up and a clog will form. Kids must also be taught to leave the toilet alone. Not only does this prevent toys from getting flushed, but it keeps little hands from being contaminated by germs lurking on the toilet bowl.

Keep Toilet Tanks Clear

While a shelf over the toilet or the top of the tank itself may seem like a handy place to store items such as extra toilet paper, soaps, ornaments or brushes and combs, they actually increase the risk of clogs. These items can be easily knocked into the bowl and fall down the drain without you noticing until it's too late. By keeping the area around the bowl clear of items that might fall in and slip down the drain, you decrease the risk of a major clog or damage to your toilet.

Addressing Slow Drains

A slow or weak flush often indicates that a clog is forming in your toilet drain. Instead of waiting until no water at all will go down, take care of the problem immediately. Plunge slow or weak flushing toilets as they occur. Use a toilet plunger, which has a necklike end on it. The plunger fits into the drain hole to form an airtight seal. Flat plungers with no protrusion on the end are meant for plunging sinks.