

## Just because you can flush it doesn't mean you should

Given the limited stock of toilet paper at our local stores, we understand that the community may turn to alternative products including tissues, wipes, and paper towels to maintain a sanitary environment. However, this does pose a threat to our infrastructure, primarily our wastewater collection and treatment systems.

The majority of sewer back-ups into a home is from the improper disposal of waste into toilets and drains. Fats, Oils, and Grease (FOG); non-dispersible materials (the term used for products that do not break down in plumbing and sewer system); diapers; wipes; feminine hygiene products; paper towels; and solid food particles. These are some of the main causes of sewer back-ups. These back-ups create serious maintenance and health issues for the homeowner and also for the public wastewater collection system.

In Consumer Reports' standard tests, toilet paper breaks down quickly. But when testers ran the same test with the flushable wipes they didn't break down at all. Because the wipes do not disintegrate easily or quickly, they clog sewage treatment equipment and sometimes home septic systems as well. Consumer Reports did find that after soaking overnight, two of the products did break down. But even after 12 hours, others still stayed in one piece.

**Toilets, plumbing and collection systems are designed for human waste and toilet paper only.** Avoid flushing any type of wipe, "flushable" or otherwise, down the toilet. This will prevent costly clogs and environmentally damaging overflows at your local sewage system. **Consumer Reports advice, if you use these products don't flush them down the toilet.** The safest option is not to flush any wipes, even those marketed as flushable. Used wipes could be bagged up and disposed of in the landfill (in the same way that baby wipes or feminine hygiene products would be).

It's timely to remind people that only the three p's should be flushed down pipes: pee, poo and paper - and that means toilet paper, and nothing else.

This information has been gathered from the following sources:

<https://www.secaucusmua.org/index.php/news-announcements/106-you-can-t-flush-this-prevent-sewer-backups>

<https://www.chemistryworld.com/news/explainer-are-flushable-wet-wipes-really-flushable/1017594.article>

<https://www.nbcdfw.com/news/business/Consumer-Reports-Are-Flushable-Wipes-Flushable-237585911.html>

<https://livegreen.recyclebank.com/column/because-you-asked/can-i-really-flush-flushable-wipes-down-the-toilet>

<https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/new-zealand/2020/03/run-out-of-toilet-paper-here-s-what-not-to-use-instead.html>

## DO NOT USE THE TOILET AS A TRASH CAN

**Flushing inappropriate items can cause plumbing problems and harm the environment**

### Things TO flush:

- Pee
- Poo
- Toilet Paper

### Things NOT to flush:

- Wipes (including flushable, baby and disinfecting)
- Paper Towel
- Cloth, rags, towels
- Feminine Hygiene Products
- Chemicals, solvents
- Dental Floss
- Disinfecting Wipes
- Grease, fats, cooking oil
- Medication, vitamins
- Condoms

