



WHAT CAN'T BE FLUSHED AND WHY

Flushing certain items down toilets and drains causes problems for our wastewater system and can negatively impact the environment. “Unflushable” items that are commonly flushed include: **wipes** (baby wipes, personal hygiene wipes, and cleaning wipes), **paper towels**, **medications**, **hair**, **feminine hygiene products**, **hypodermic needles**, and **contraceptive devices**. These products don't break down quickly enough in the wastewater system (or at all) and can end up clogging our sewers and your pipes. These sewer clogs can cause sewer overflows which pose public health issues, damage to homes and property, and are very costly to clean up.

In 2010, the City of St. Helens invested approximately \$700,000 to upgrade the Wastewater Treatment Plant's screening equipment, which removes approximately 350 pounds of “unflushable” items *every day* for landfill disposal as seen in the photo at right. That works out to be just over one ton of material removed each week and over **63 tons per year, from St. Helens and Columbia City alone.**



WHAT IF THE LABEL SAYS ‘FLUSHABLE’?

Products that say they're “flushable” – like tampons and wipes – may make it down your toilet, but they may not make it through the sewer and are likely **not** biodegradable. There are currently no regulations to specify which products can be labelled “flushable,” although cities around the world are currently developing standards to more accurately label whether or not products are truly flushable. For now, the best place for these items is in the trash – **NOT** the toilet.

HOW TO DISPOSE OF EXPIRED MEDICATIONS

Flushed medications are not fully removed in the wastewater treatment process and some chemicals may end up in our environment. Keep these pollutants out of our waterways: dispose of expired medications by taking them to a permanent collection box or by participating in regularly scheduled Drug Take Back events. More information can be found on the Oregon Health Authority website by searching for “Drug Take Back.” The St. Helens Police Department has a permanent prescription drug drop box located inside their station lobby.



WHAT CAN BE FLUSHED?

The only things that are okay to flush down the toilet are body fluids, excrement, and toilet paper. Anything else wreaks havoc on our sewer system and could potentially make its way into the environment. Please do not use your toilet, and ultimately our rivers, as a trash can – Thank you!



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