**9 Crazy Things that Clog Your Pipes!**

There's no denying that plumbing is a messy business; most of us cringe at the thought of the nightmarish stuff plumbing pros encounter on a daily basis. Indeed, our expert sources tell us they've pulled everything you can imagine from pipes and drains—from a pair of dentures to 10 pounds of wheat (seriously) to a host of dead rodents and raccoons.

And while some plumbing problems are unavoidable—like, say, those dead critters—others are the result of user error. In other words: People stupidly shoving stuff where it really doesn't belong. Out of sight, out of mind, right?

And if the potential shame isn't enough incentive, consider this: The average plumber's house call [runs between $150 and $460](http://www.homeadvisor.com/cost/plumbing/). So, save yourself some cash (and humiliation), and take heed of what plumbers tell us are the most common clogging culprits. You might just be surprised to discover how many of these you're guilty of tossing down the drain.

1. Fruit peels and rinds

If you're like us, you probably love to test the limits of your garbage disposal. But the first step to avoiding clogs is to scale back on what you put down the drain to begin with. No. 1 on the no-no list? Fruit rinds. These bad boys simply don't break down easily.

A good rule of thumb: If you wouldn't eat it, don't put it down the kitchen drain.

2. Starches (and other fibrous foods)

This one surprised us. Apparently, starchy and fibrous foods—including potatoes, celery, corn, corn husks, onion skins, asparagus, and artichokes—expand in the garbage disposal and can wrap around its blades, damaging the motor and causing a big backup.

"Think about what happens when you overcook pasta, rice, potatoes, or beans," says **Glenn Gallas**, vice president of operations for Mr. Rooter Plumbing. "They turn into a pasty substance capable of clogging the kitchen drain if you dispose of them there."

Adds **Janet O'Dea**, owner of Powers Plumbing in San Diego, "We had one [instance on Thanksgiving](https://www.realtor.com/news/trends/beware-of-brown-friday-plumbers-busiest-day-of-the-year/) when the plumber was sent out to service a clogged kitchen sink, and the owner admitted that she put a box of mashed potato buds down the drain, ran the hot water, and the disposal literally was stuffed full with mashed potatoes."

**To avoid such problems, O'Dea recommends using the** [**garbage disposal**](https://www.realtor.com/advice/home-improvement/how-to-unclog-a-garbage-disposal/) **only for crumbs and putting other larger kitchen scraps and debris into the trash.**

3. Grease, oil, and fats

"Grease should ***never***be allowed to go down the kitchen sink drain, because it will coat the pipes and create sludge," O'Dea says. "Grease also will build up over time, making the pipe size constricted and preventing you from getting good drainage."

Instead of dumping your grease down the drain, pour it into an empty container let it congeal. *Then* throw it in the trash.

We're not quite sure why this warrants a reminder, but Gallas also cautions against dumping grease and oil waste in the toilet.

"Pipes are a lot like arteries," he says. "When fats flush the pipes and cool off, they freeze and congeal, building up like cholesterol. After a while, the blockage can become too great, causing your pipes to have a proverbial heart attack."

4. Feminine products and cotton swabs

We don't want to write about this one any more than you want to read about it. But we have to, because plumbing professionals *keep finding these items* in homeowners' drains and pipes.

We're here to tell you once and for all: Stop. Flushing. This. Stuff.

OK, moving on...

5. Wipes and cosmetic towelettes

"Anything that claims to be flushable besides toilet paper should never be put down the toilet because it won't don't break down," O'Dea says. "If it makes it past your drainage system, it continues to play havoc with the municipal system."

The consistency of toilet paper allows it to fall apart quickly when immersed in water, she explains—unlike towels, towelettes, or wipes.

"Once a drain is clogged with wipes (or paper towels), you will likely have to call a plumber to clear the drain—the plunger won't provide enough force to get the line clear," she says.

And sorry, new (tired) parents: The same logic applies to baby wipes—they don't mix well with aging infrastructure.

"Many older neighborhoods, like those in the northeastern United States, are finding themselves at risk for shelling out big bucks to clear clogs related to wet wipes," Gallas says.

6. Kitty litter

Don't even *think* about dumping cat litter down the toilet. Clay, silica, and sand are extremely troublesome for any plumbing systems, because those substances are designed to absorb moisture and create clumps, which turn into large clogs almost immediately once they enter your pipes.

7. Egg shells

There's an old wives' tale that claims [eggshells are good for disposals](https://www.hunker.com/12472277/do-eggshells-sharpen-a-garbage-disposal) because they sharpen the blades. False!

"The membrane layers of eggshells can wrap around the shredder ring, potentially damaging the disposal, not to mention the sand like consistency of egg shells can cause pipes to clog," Gallas says.

8. Toys

Anyone who's shared a space with a child is likely nodding knowingly: Toys have the darnedest way of scattering, well, everywhere.

"One evening we received a call from a casino we often work with who had complaints of a backed-up sewer line," says **Robyn Roth**, owner of Mr. Rooter Plumbing of Yavapai & Coconino Counties in Arizona. "When we arrived, the clog was so bad that the foreign object had been pushed into the main sewer line, backing up all pipes throughout the casino. If we didn’t act fast the entire casino would have flooded with raw sewage! A combination of sawing, digging, and jetting led us to the culprit of four Thomas the Train toys that had been flushed down the toilet in the day care of the casino."

Avoid a train wreck (sorry) of similar proportions by keeping toys far, far away from the toilet.

9. Dental floss, hair, and other stringy stuff

Believe it or not, O'Dea says that dental floss (in addition to "flushable" wipes and tampons) are the most common clog culprits for bathroom drains.

Floss and string "are neither biodegradable nor easily flushed down the toilet," Gallas says. Add in all the hair that's swirling down there and consider how this stuff can easily form knots and clumps, trapping in icky odors and resulting in major clogs.

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