



# The Town of Barnstable

## Department of Public Works Water Pollution Control Division

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## WHAT NOT TO FLUSH!

Putting the wrong things down the drain can cause damage to the sewer system, can cause backups into your home, and could cause the release of sewage or harmful chemicals into the environment. Anyone using the sewer system should be responsible for what they flush or pour down the drain. The only thing that should be flushed down the toilet is human waste and toilet paper. Below is a list of things that should never be flushed down the drain.

- Baby wipes
- Napkins
- Condoms
- Tissues
- Lint, dust, dirt
- Bandages
- Unused medications
- Tampons and applicators
- Cotton balls or swabs
- Cleaning wipes
- Cigarette butts
- Dental floss
- Hazardous materials
- Fats, oils, grease

**Wipes:** Many companies advertise wet wipes as “flushable”. However, these wipes are not biodegradable and create major problems in sewer systems. In many cases they block the pipes and drains in the house in which they were flushed. If they make their way into the sewer system they can cause blockages in sewer pipes and clog the pumps in the Town’s pumping stations. Please do not flush baby wipes, wet wipes, or cleaning wipes down the toilet! See the video under “resources” on the WPCD webpage for a demonstration of how these wipes fail to break down.

**Fats, Oils, Grease (FOG):** There is no bigger problem in the Barnstable sewer system than the accumulation of fats, oils, and grease within the system. Grease accumulates in pipes and creates blockages, especially when it mixes with wipes or other non-disposable products. It is important for residents to collect grease in a container and then dispose of it into a trash can once it is cool. All food establishments must pump their grease traps every three months in accordance with Town Code.

**Hazardous Materials:** The wastewater treatment plant is designed to remove nutrients and other biodegradable contaminants from wastewater. The facility is not designed to treat hazardous materials. Flushing things like gasoline, cleaners, disinfectants, oil, acids/bases, or other chemicals can cause harm to sewer pipes, the treatment process, the environment, and the workers serving your community. The Barnstable Transfer station holds household hazardous waste drop-off days quarterly. Please check the Transfer Station webpage for household hazardous waste drop-off dates.

**Unused Medication:** Unused medication should not be flushed down the toilet. In many cases it will dissolve in water, pass through the treatment process and back into your local groundwater. Unused medications should be disposed of in the garbage or through local drug take-back programs.