

WHAT SHOULDN'T I PUT DOWN THE DRAIN?

Type of waste	What problems can it cause?	What should I do with it?
Cooking fat, oil and grease	Fats cool, solidify and stick to the insides of drains and sewers. This is one of the biggest causes of blocked household drains, causing significant inconvenience and expense.	Let fat, oil and grease cool, then transfer to a pot and put in a bin. Or mix with unsalted nuts and seeds to feed birds during the winter. Cooking oil can be disposed of at a recycling centre.
Nappies and all types of wipes	Nappies and wipes block drains. 'Flushable' wipes do not stay in the sewer system long enough to break down.	Bag and bin it. Keep a bin in the bathroom for quick and hygienic disposal. Consider using cloth nappies.
Cotton buds, cotton wool and dental floss	Cotton items block drains and waste water treatment works. They can wash up on beaches, creating an eyesore and endangering wildlife.	Bag and bin it. Keep a bin in the bathroom for quick and hygienic disposal.
Tampons, sanitary towels, plasters and condoms	Sanitary items block drains and waste water treatment works. Even if labelled 'flushable' they are not in the sewer system long enough to break down.	Bag and bin it. Keep a bin in the bathroom for quick and hygienic disposal.
Medicines and tablets	Medicines are not fully removed at waste water treatment works. They enter the environment where they can harm wildlife and affect human health.	Unwanted or out of date medicines should be returned to a pharmacy where they will be disposed of free of charge.
Pet waste	Cat litter, bags of dog waste, sawdust and shavings should not be flushed because they will block drains.	Cat litter and sawdust should be put in the rubbish bin; some types can be composted. Dog waste bins are provided in many public areas. Digesters (which hygienically dispose of dog waste in your garden) are also available.
Needles and razor blades	Needles and blades have to be removed by hand at waste water treatment works, putting staff in danger. Members of the public, pets and wildlife are also at risk.	Never put hypodermic needles or blades in with normal waste. Sharps bins for needles are freely available from chemists. Wrap razor blades and put them in the rubbish bin.
Garden chemicals e.g. pesticides	These chemicals may end up in the drinking water system and can also harm wildlife.	Contact your council's waste team for advice on disposal.
Paints	Paints pollute watercourses and are toxic to wildlife. Waste water treatment works can only tolerate a small amount, otherwise treatment processes are affected.	Small amounts of water-based paint can be washed off brushes into a sink (but never into outside drains). If disposing of larger quantities or solvent based paints contact your council's waste team. Left over paint can be given away to others.
Paint thinners/brush cleaners	Paint thinners pollute watercourses and are toxic to wildlife.	Contact your council's waste team for advice on disposal.
Engine oil	Even a small quantity of oil can pollute watercourses and is toxic to wildlife.	Engine oil can be recycled. Contact the Oil Bank Line.
Soapy water e.g. used to clean car or wheelie bin	Soapy water left on streets and pavements can wash into surface water drains, causing pollution. Wheelie bins can be contaminated by chemicals that are harmful in the environment.	If possible, use commercial facilities so that the wash water enters the foul system. Otherwise, minimise detergent and dispose of wash water in a sink/toilet (not in an outside drain).

WHO TO CONTACT DRAIN CLEARANCE

Contractors are listed under:

- Drain and pipe cleaning
- Plumbers
- Septic tanks
- Sewage consultants
- Waste disposal services

THE DRAIN CARE GUIDE

FREE INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Greener Scotland

Information on local recycling services

www.greenerScotland.org

Scottish Water

Emergency number: 0845 601 8855

www.scottishwater.co.uk

Scottish Environment Protection Agency

Pollution Hotline 0800 80 70 60

www.sepa.org.uk

Oil Bank Line

03708 506 506

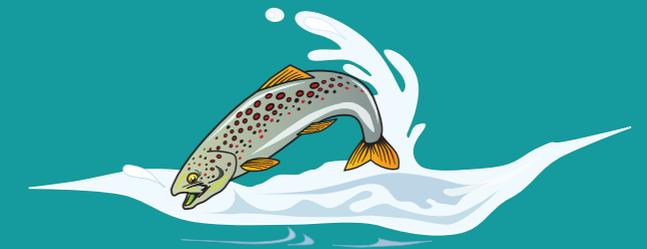
www.oilbankline.org.uk

Further information and copies of this leaflet

www.theriverdee.org

info@theriverdee.org

Tips to help avoid blocked drains, prevent harm to water supplies and the environment, and save you money.



This leaflet has been produced by the Dee Catchment Partnership, an independent umbrella body working for the sustainable management of the River Dee catchment in north east Scotland.



© Dee Catchment Partnership 2014

www.theriverdee.org

HOW DO DRAINAGE SYSTEMS WORK?

There are two types of drain and they are designed to do different things.

Foul water drains carry waste water from washing machines, dishwashers, sinks, baths and toilets to a waste water treatment works where treated effluent is discharged to rivers or the sea. They can only handle water, urine, faeces and toilet paper.

Surface water drains carry water running off rooftops, roads and paved areas to the nearest watercourse. Surface water drains are designed to prevent flooding and the water they carry receives minimal treatment. They can only handle rainwater and snowmelt.

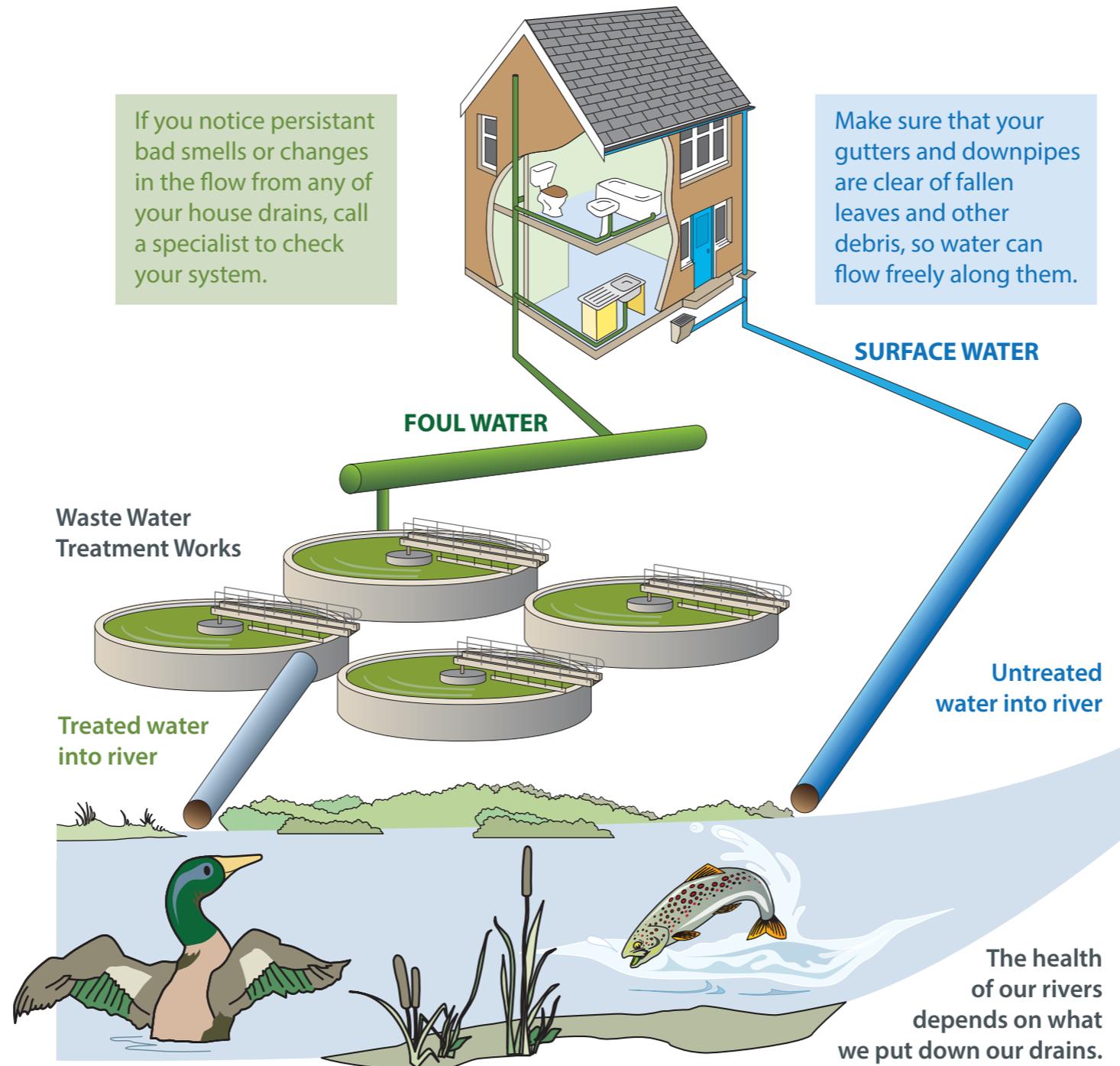
In older drainage systems, foul and surface water drains usually join up to form **combined sewers**. Overflows are built into these systems to prevent backing up and during heavy rain an untreated mixture of surface and foul water is sometimes released directly into rivers.

To prevent flooding and to enable the treatment processes to work effectively, all types of drain need to flow freely.

Putting the wrong things down drains causes blockages, stopping waste water from flowing away. When waste water backs up it can come out of the toilet or sink, flooding your home. Your drainage network provider spends millions of pounds each year removing solid waste (e.g. nappies, sanitary items, congealed cooking oil and fat) that has blocked the sewer. This adds a significant cost to your water bill.

It is easy to put the wrong thing down a drain and forget about it, but this will always cause problems somewhere in the drainage network.

All the water that goes down a drain is eventually returned to rivers or the sea.



DOs and DON'Ts

DO try to work out where your surface water drains are - so that you can avoid polluting them.

DO keep garden products and weedkillers away from drains - use them sparingly and according to instructions.

DO use household cleaning products labelled 'environmentally friendly' or 'low phosphate' - alternatively, natural products such as bicarbonate of soda, vinegar and lemon juice are cheap and effective.

DO use household cleaning products in moderate amounts - try using less detergent in your washing machine and dishwasher.

DO use a sink strainer, because food scraps can cause blockages - put them in your compost bin or green cone.

DO keep a bin in the bathroom - to dispose of rubbish safely.

DO put used cooking fats in a container and dispose of in a bin - alternatively feed to garden birds.

DO take waste cooking and engine oil to a recycling centre.

DON'T flush anything other than urine, faeces and toilet paper down the toilet - put everything else in a rubbish bin.

DON'T dispose of grease, cooking or frier oil down any drain - wipe out pans, pour fat into a container and put it in a bin. Larger volumes can be taken to a recycling centre.

DON'T put paints, weedkillers or other harsh chemicals down any drain - dispose of them at a recycling centre.

DON'T put engine oil, brake fluid or antifreeze down any drain - dispose of them at a recycling centre.