

Preventing Clogged Drains

Tips for the Kitchen Sink

- Pour grease into cans and throw them in the garbage. If you empty grease into the sink, the grease collects along the sides of the pipe and then food particles stick to the pipes, eventually contributing to a clog. Also too much grease can eventually cause sewer blockages since the bacteria in sewage systems cannot readily break down grease.
- When you are grinding up food in a disposal, run plenty of cold water to flush food particles down the pipe. Using too little water can contribute to the particles collecting along the sides of the pipe.
- Don't empty coffee grounds in the sink.
- Pour a kettle of boiling water down the drain once a week to melt away any fat or grease that may have collected.

Tips for the Bathroom

- Clean the pop-up stoppers in sinks frequently. Hair often collects here and causes clogs.
- Never flush heavy paper products down the drain. Excess paper can clog the toilet and/or the whole sewer system.

General Tips

- Never dump chemicals like paint or paint thinner down the drain. Avoid pouring hot wax or other substances in the drains.
- If you have your own home septic tank, have a professional inspect it every two to three years. Some regions require septic tank inspection on a regular basis. Check with your local health board about the rules in your community.
- Every six months, keep your drains running clear by using a non-caustic drain cleaner.

Clear a Clogged Drain

As the pool of water collects around the drain, you get a sinking feeling in your stomach. You dread another costly visit from the plumber. However, clogged drains are usually easy enough to correct on your own. An average homeowner should be able to clear most clogs in two hours or less, depending on the severity of the clog. This article explains a number of simple ways to unclog drains and how to avoid clogged drains in the future.



Cleaning Strainers and Stoppers

Many clogs collect around the strainer or stopper in the sink or bathtub. To unclog the drain, all you may need to do is remove the strainer and clean it. Here are a few tips:

- If there is a strainer over the clogged drain, you should remove any screws holding the strainer in place and then pry the strainer up with the tip of a standard screwdriver. When the strainer is loose, remove and wash away anything that has collected around the strainer. Clean around the top of the drain.
- Stoppers need to be cleaned on a regular basis since hair tends to twist around their base. First remove the sink stopper. Some stoppers are removed by turning them with your fingers. Others require that you unscrew a pivot rod that is connected to the opener. This rod should be located under the base of the sink. If you need to use pliers to remove the stopper, make sure to pad them so you won't chip the chrome finish. Once the stopper is removed, clean it and wipe out the base of the drain opening.

Using the Plunger



One of the most trusted tools for unclogging drains, the plunger, can usually clear the blockage if it's not too far into the main drain. Follow these tips to make plunging more effective:

- Block the overflow holes, other drains in adjacent sinks, or any other openings by stuffing wet rags into the holes.
- If water is not already present in the basin, run two to three inches of water over the drain hole. The water helps to force the obstruction out of the way and lets you know when you succeed in pushing the clog out.
- Apply a thick layer of petroleum jelly to the rim of the plunger. The petroleum jelly helps to create a tighter seal, thereby producing greater suction.
- Force the plunger handle down powerfully numerous times. After plunging for a minute or two, stop to test whether water will drain from the sink. Try plunging again if the drain is still sluggish. When clear, run hot water to flush away any remaining particles from the clog.

WARNING: Using a plunger on a toilet may cause the wax ring seal to break allowing a slow release of water from the base of the toilet each time the toilet is flushed. If you clear a toilet with a plunger make sure you keep an eye on the area around the foot of the toilet and behind. Any moisture on or discoloration of the flooring around the toilet base should be reported to you property manager.

Clearing With Chemical Drain Cleaners

If the methods above fail, the next logical step is to use a chemical drain cleaner. Fast-acting chemical drain cleaners usually contain a high concentration of lye or sulfuric acid to burn through all sorts of tough clogs quickly and thoroughly.

When using a chemical drain opener, make sure to read and follow all of the directions and warnings on the bottle. After following the directions on the bottle, remember to run plenty of water to flush the chemicals out of your pipes.