

CLEAN WATER IS UP TO YOU

Put your septic system on a diet: Ditch the grease

From Brodhead Watershed Association



Fatbergs – fats, oils, and grease combined with solids – can clog sewer systems. (Contributed photo)

What's a little bacon grease down the drain? Just run the hot water, zap it with some dish soap and down it goes. Right?

Wrong!

Septic systems break down tissue paper and waste. Period. Fats, oils, and grease down the drain can cause sewage backups (yuck) and even seriously damage a septic system (big yuck — and big bucks).

If your septic isn't working as it should, it can quickly contaminate drinking water — not just yours, but also your neighbors'. And it can contaminate creeks, wetlands, and lakes, putting birds, fish, and other wildlife at risk.

Being on a sewer system doesn't let you off the hook

Public and community sewers are also at risk from fats, oils, and grease (known to sewer operators as FOG). In fact, FOG in sewer systems can combine with solids to form "fatbergs." These hard, rock-like masses can be huge — in some cases, weighing tons — and extremely costly to remove.

Ditch the grease safely

It doesn't take much to keep the FOG out of your septic. Pour cooled fats, oils, and grease from cooking into a container. Use something that you can't recycle locally, such as a #5 plastic or wax-coated container. When the container is full, put it in the trash. Or designate a wide-mouth jar or metal canister as your FOG container. When full, scrape the gunk into the trash, and re-use the container.

So whether it's bacon or fries or Friday night burgers, pour off the leftover grease and wipe out the residue with a paper towel before you wash that frypan.

Keep your septic system in good shape to protect clean water

When your septic is working, it treats your household's wastewater and allows it filter into the soil, helping to replenish groundwater. Need more information? Talk to your township's sewage enforcement officer or go to www.epa.gov/septic

Clean Water Is Up To You is a series published by Brodhead Watershed Association. See brodheadwatershed.org.

