

# Keep it Flowing!

## *A Guide to Caring for Your Septic System*

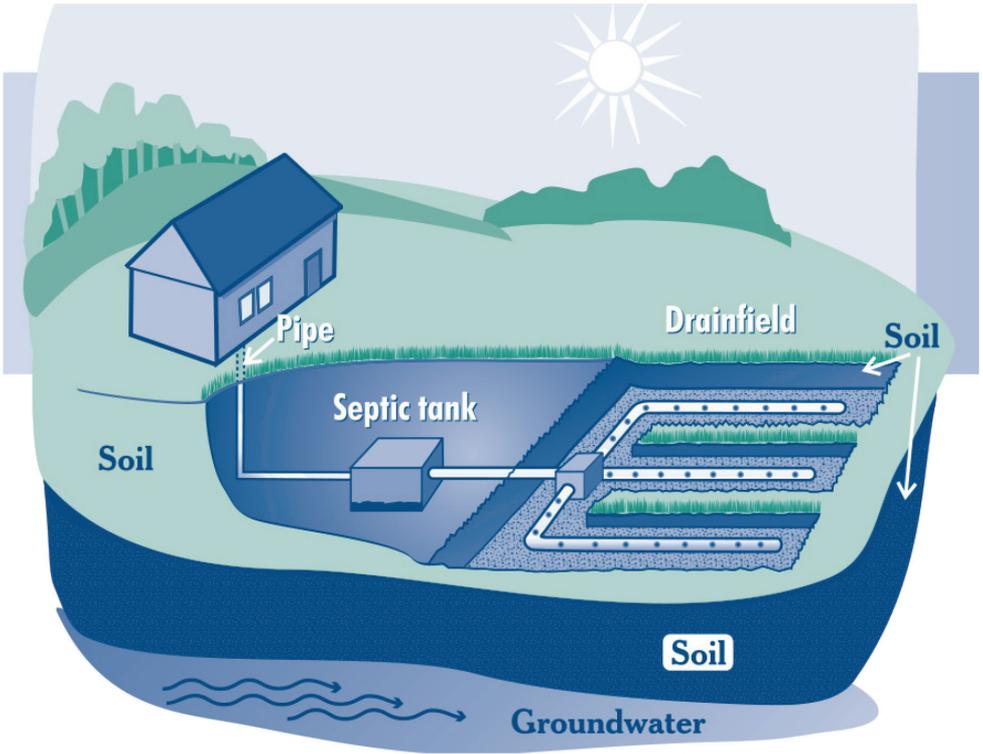


Illustration courtesy of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



# Your Precast Concrete Septic Tank

Congratulations on your new precast concrete septic tank! A high-quality precast concrete tank is an important part of your septic system. With proper care, it will provide you with many years of reliable service.

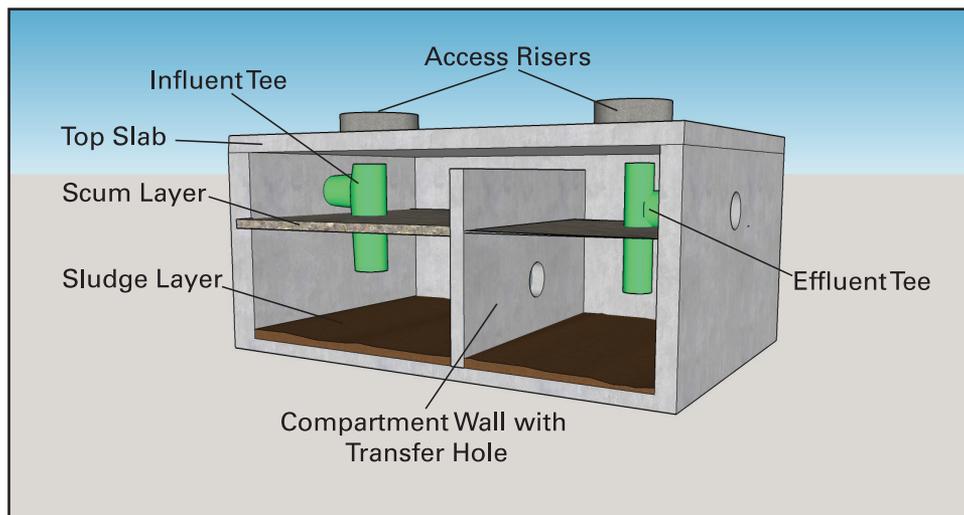
Septic systems come in many styles and may include a variety of components that require additional service, but the same basic care guidelines apply to nearly all septic systems.

Check with your installer or local Health Department if you have questions. Or, see the list of resources at the end of this booklet.

## ***Top 4 Things You Can Do to Protect Your System***

1. Regularly inspect your system and pump your tank as necessary.
2. Use water efficiently.
3. Don't dispose of household hazardous wastes in sinks or toilets.
4. Take care of your drain field.

-Environmental Protection Agency





## A Long-Lasting Septic System

With proper care and routine maintenance, your septic system will last a long time. It is important to follow these simple guidelines to ensure years of trouble-free service.

- It is extremely important to keep man-made materials from entering your septic system. So never flush plastic wrappers, diapers, tampons, coffee grounds, cigarette butts, cooking fats, paint or food items.
- Using a garbage disposal will cause your tank to fill more rapidly. Many states require larger tanks if garbage disposals are used.
- Determine how often you need to have your tank pumped based on its size, number of people living in the house and usage patterns. Your installer may be able to help you determine a schedule for inspections and pumping.
- Divert roof drains and water from the driveway away from the septic system.
- Draw a diagram marking the location of your septic tank and disposal field and keep it in a handy place.
- Never park on or drive through the disposal field. Do not park or drive over the tank, unless it is traffic-rated. Cars, trucks, excavating equipment and other heavy equipment will damage the system. Lawn mowers and lawn tractors are acceptable.

### ***What's in the Tank?***

Your precast concrete septic tank is a high-quality, watertight container that holds wastewater long enough to allow solids to settle out (sludge) and oil and grease to float to the surface (scum).

Compartments in the tank prevent the sludge and scum from leaving the tank and traveling into the drain field.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Why should I maintain my septic system?

When septic systems are properly designed, constructed and maintained, they effectively reduce or eliminate most human health or environmental threats posed by pollutants in household wastewater. However, they require regular maintenance or they can fail. Septic systems need to be monitored to ensure that they work properly throughout their service lives.

## How often does my system need to be pumped?

Your installer should be able to help you determine how often your system needs to be inspected and pumped.

## How do I know if I have a blocked pipe, a full septic tank or a clogged disposal field?

Signs of a failing system include slow draining or flushing of toilets; sewage backup into the house; sewage odors near the tank; and sewage in the lawn. Problems can be difficult to diagnose, so it is best to call a professional if you experience any of these situations.

## Should I use a septic system additive to help keep the tank clean?

Products are available that claim to break down sludge in septic tanks so that they never need to be pumped. While there is some disagreement on the effectiveness of additives, the typical septic tank will contain all the microbes it needs for effective treatment. The best way to ensure your system works properly is through periodic pumping and regular inspections.

## Can too much water damage the system?

The best way to ensure the long-term health of your system is to avoid flooding it with water. Leaking faucets and older toilets that use lots of water make your system less efficient. Washing multiple loads of clothes on the same day will also tax many septic systems. In general it's a good idea to monitor the use of water in your home and try to avoid using too much water at the same time.

## *How Does it Work?*

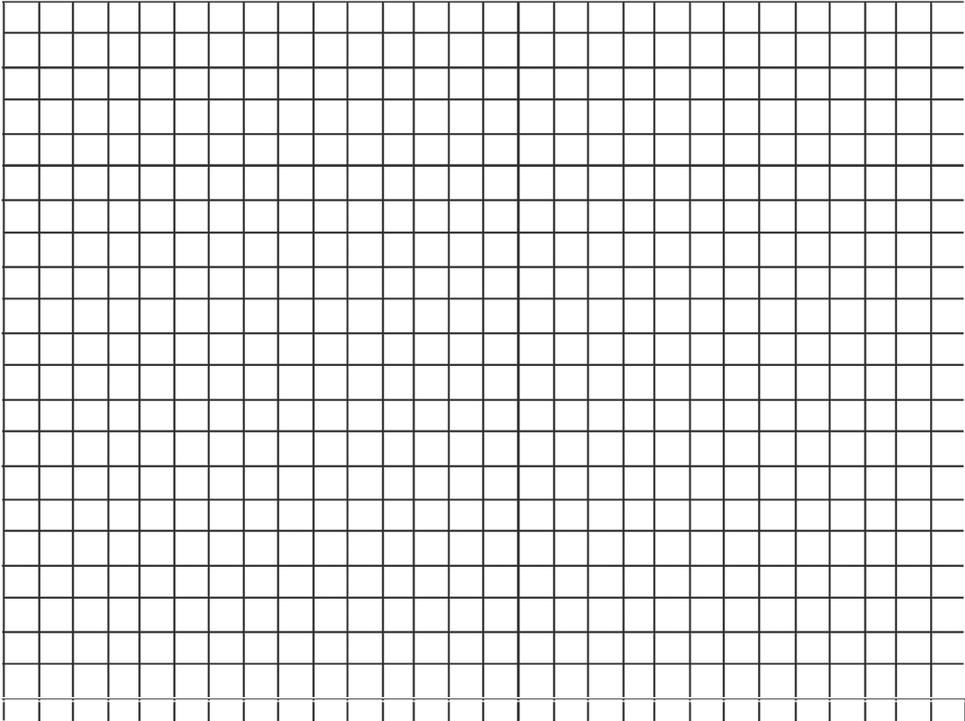
Everything that goes down the drain and toilet ends up in the septic tank. There it is greeted by billions of microscopic bacteria that break down the waste as it is filtered and separated through a variety of chambers (see diagram). The filtered waste leaves the tank and, in most cases, passes through a disposal field – a series of underground perforated pipes – where it is again filtered by the soil before it reaches the water table.

# Septic System Maintenance Record

Date	Description
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

## Diagram of Septic System Location

So you remember the exact location of your septic tank and disposal field in relation to your house, make a diagram showing the house, the tank and drain field.



# For More Information

## Environmental Protection Agency

[epa.gov/septic](http://epa.gov/septic)

## National Small Flows Clearinghouse

[nesc.wvu.edu](http://nesc.wvu.edu)

## National Precast Concrete Association

[precast.org/precast-product/septic-tanks/](http://precast.org/precast-product/septic-tanks/)

## National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association

[nowra.org](http://nowra.org)

## Find a Local Professional

[septiclocator.com](http://septiclocator.com)

## National Association of Wastewater Transporters

[nawt.org](http://nawt.org)

### ***What Does an Inspection Include?***

- Locating the system
- Uncovering access holes
- Flushing the toilets
- Checking for signs of backup
- Measuring scum and sludge layers
- Identifying any leaks
- Inspecting mechanical components
- Pumping the tank (if necessary)



**YOUR LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDER IS:**