

Tips to Avoid Trouble

Have your system inspected regularly and pumped out every three to five years. Keep a sketch of your septic system along with records of inspections, repairs, pump outs, permits issued, and other system maintenance activities.

Limit the amount of chemicals entering the system. Clean using low-phosphate detergents and baking soda. Use boiling water or drain snakes instead of caustic drain openers. Avoid using septic tank additives in a fully functioning system as they are not scientifically proven and can be harmful to the system.

Never use anti-bacterial soaps or dispose of household hazardous wastes such as pesticides, paint, varnish, solvents, antifreeze, disinfectants, prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, and other chemicals into sinks and toilets. Doing so kills the beneficial bacteria responsible for digesting waste.

Don't use your septic system as a trash can by dumping non-biodegradables such as dental floss, feminine hygiene products, condoms, diapers, cotton swabs, cigarette butts, paper towels, residual cooking fat, coffee grounds and cat litter down your toilet or drains.

Protect the integrity of the septic system. Plant only grass over the system as roots from shrubs and trees clog and damage the tank and pipes. Keep vehicles, heavy equipment, and storage sheds off the area to prevent soil compaction and the collapse of the system.

Use water efficiently. Run the washing machine and dishwasher only when full, don't do several loads of laundry at once, - space them out. Avoid long showers, maintain plumbing, and install water conservation fixtures or devices to avoid system overflow.

Prolong the life of an aging system. If your system requires pump outs more often than every three years there may be some benefit to professional application of aeration and non-contaminating chemicals during pump outs to help prolong system function.

Sources & Additional Information

The Impact of Septic Systems on the Environment

www.longislandsoundstudy.net

EPA Onsite/Decentralized Management Homepage

www.epa.gov/owm/onsite

National Small Flows Clearinghouse

www.nesc.wvu.edu

National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association, Inc.

www.nowra.org



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Designed by Cashin Associates, P.C., revised by the C.E.S.S.P.O.O.L. Project 2012



THE C.E.S.S.P.O.O.L. PROJECT

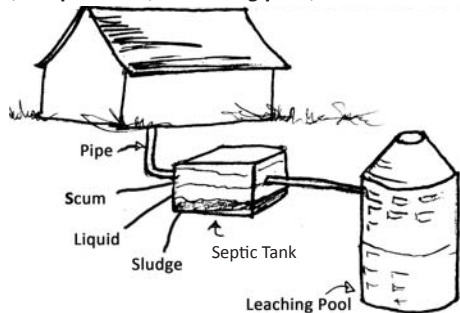
Coordinated Environmental
Solutions for Septic Problems
Occurring On Long Island

MANAGING your septic system

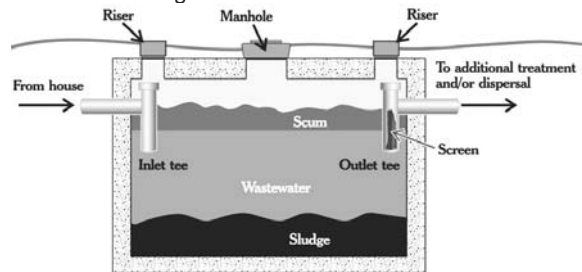
Properly designed, constructed, and maintained septic systems can provide effective, long-term treatment of household wastewater. As a homeowner, it is your responsibility to care for your septic system.

How Septic Systems Work

On Long Island's north shore, a typical **septic system** is comprised of four main components: a **pipe** from the home, a **septic tank**, a **leaching pool**, and the **soil**.*



The septic tank is an underground water-tight container designed to hold wastewater long enough to allow the solids to settle out (forming sludge) and separate from the liquid and allowing oil and grease (scum) to float to the surface. Partial decomposition of the solid materials takes place in the septic tank. The wastewater is discharged from the septic tank into the leaching pool, where it can be slowly released through percolation and filtered by the surrounding soil. Bacteria in the soil digest the wastewater, removing most harmful organisms, organic matter, and some nutrients before it reaches the groundwater.



source: www.epa.gov/own/onsite

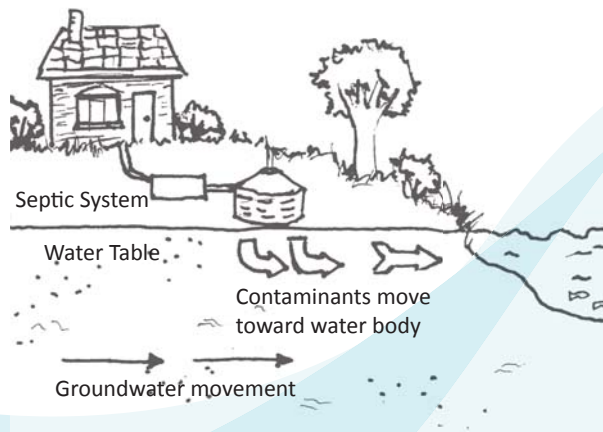
* Prior to the mid- 1970s only cesspools were installed. These do not have a septic tank to treat solids and therefore are more susceptible to malfunction. Cesspools should be upgraded to septic systems whenever possible. The maintenance measures discussed apply to cesspools as well.

Importance of Maintenance conserving money & protecting our groundwater

Only properly maintained septic systems can effectively reduce or eliminate most human health and environmental threats caused by pollutants in household wastewater. Mal-functioning septic systems lower property values, are expensive to repair or replace, and can become a legal liability.

Effective treatment of sewage helps to prevent the spread of infection and disease and serves to protect water resources. When a septic system fails, it allows untreated human waste and its associated nutrients as well as bacterial and viral pathogens to contaminate the groundwater and surface waters.

Unfiltered sewage can cause diseases and infections in both people and animals and is a primary cause of local beach closures. Excess nitrogen and phosphorus can have a serious impact on the Long Island Sound, Manhasset Bay, Hempstead Harbor, Oyster Bay, and Cold Spring Harbor, causing excess aquatic weed growth, hypoxia, fish die-offs, and closure of shellfishing beds.



adapted from: The Long Island Sound Study

Protect Your Septic System!

Properly constructed, operated, and maintained systems can have a life expectancy that exceeds twenty-five years. The septic tank should be inspected regularly and accumulated solids pumped out every three to five years. The necessary frequency increases with heavy use, whirlpools, hot tubs, or garbage disposals

The more water a household conserves, the less water enters the septic system. Efficient use of water can both improve the operation of the septic system and reduce the failure rates.



source: www.epa.gov/own/onsite

Failure Symptoms

- wastewater backups into the home
- offensive odors and sluggish drains
- lush, green, vegetative growth over the system
- pooling water around septic system and/or basement
- Pump outs in excess of more than once a year

Causes of Failure

Failure to periodically inspect and pump the tank and conduct regular maintenance repairs

Destroying beneficial bacteria responsible for digesting solids through disposal of solvents, poisons, and other household chemicals into the system

Overflowing the system with large quantities of water pumped into the septic system (such as from a hot tub, swimming pool discharge, or excessive wash water) which stir the solids in the tank and pushes them out into the leaching pool causing it to clog and fail