



# 16 Things You Should Never Flush Down The Toilet

Some of them might surprise you...

BY [BRITTNEY MORGAN](#) JUN 29, 2018

There are certain things you *know* you shouldn't flush down the toilet (even if your kids didn't get the memo, like the Great Lego Flushing Incident Of 2017), but for every obvious pick, there are a few we're all guilty of tossing in, just because we didn't realize it'd cause any issues. Until we had to call the plumber ... and get that bill afterward.

To ensure that your pipes stay clog-free, here are the 16 you should really, truly avoid.

## 1. Baby Wipes

Yes, even the ones that say they're flushable. According to plumbing company [Boulden Brothers](#), these are frequently the cause of clogs and should always be thrown out in a wastebasket instead. Mike Agugliaro, co-owner of plumbing company [Gold Medal Service](#) also backed this up to [TODAY](#), noting that even "flushable" wipes don't disintegrate the way toilet paper does, which can eventually cause plumbing issues.

## 2. Q-Tips & Cotton Pads

Cotton balls, cotton pads, and Q-Tips are definitely not safe to flush — they don't break down the way toilet paper (even cotton toilet paper) does, and according to [Boulden Brothers](#), all they really do is clump together in your pipes and cause problems.

## 3. Menstrual Products

This one might shock you, but menstrual products (tampons, pads, etc.) should also never be flushed down the toilet. Why? Because as [Agugliaro](#) told [TODAY](#), they're products that are meant to absorb water, not break down in it, meaning they'll only expand when you flush them — and that's no good for your plumbing.

## 4. Condoms

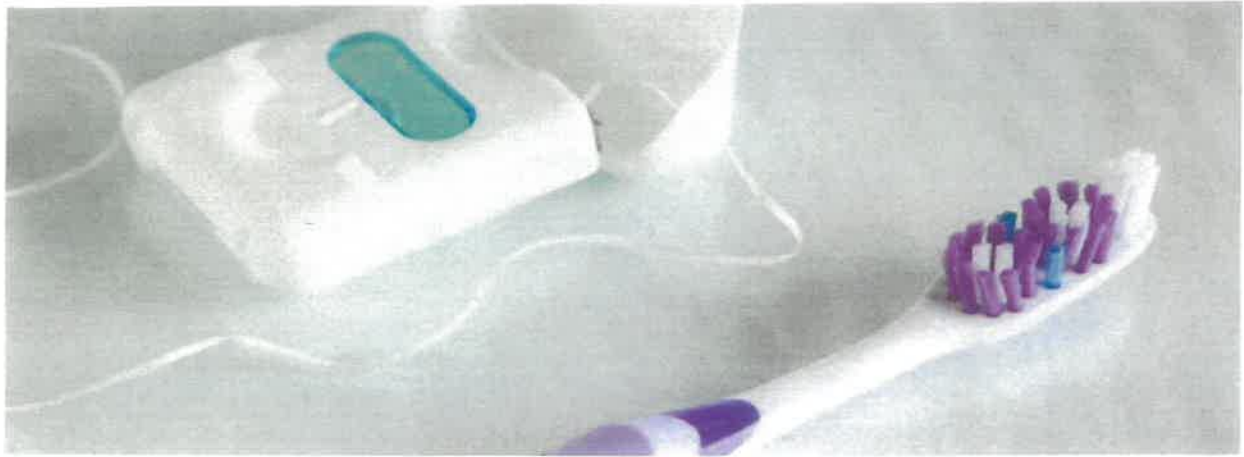
Condoms are also not designed to break down in water, so flushing them can cause clogs in toilets and septic tanks, according to [Agugliaro](#).

## 5. Diapers

Honestly, you shouldn't even be able to flush a diaper (like menstrual products, they expand in water and diapers are probably already too big to get down the drain) but on the off-chance that you can and do, it'll expand and get caught in your pipes. That's what diaper pails are for!

## 6. Dental Floss

Not only can dental floss clog your pipes, it can also cause environmental damage, according to [Boulden Brothers](#). And as [Agugliaro](#) explained, floss basically turns into a net when flushed, catching and holding onto other debris — it can even wrap around parts of your septic system and burn out the motor. Yikes.



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### **7. Paper Towels & Tissues**

You might think paper towels and tissues aren't all that different from toilet paper, but they're simply not designed to break down the way toilet paper does. In the event that you need to use paper towels or tissues in place of toilet paper for any reason, Boulden Brothers recommends putting them in a wastebasket instead.

### **8. Medication**

If you have old pills that you need to get rid of, don't flush them — toilet water doesn't break them down properly, meaning the medication gets into the water and can cause toxic environmental effects, according to Boulden Brothers.

### **9. Cigarette Butts**

Speaking of toxic chemicals, that's exactly what flushing cigarettes down the drain adds to the water, too, Boulden Brothers explains. Not to mention, it's a huge waste of water when you can simply throw them out properly. And, cigarette butts can also cause clogs, according to Agugliaro.

### **10. Kitty Litter**

Some brands of kitty litter claim to be flushable, but as Agugliaro pointed out, most toilets don't use enough water to move the litter along properly in your pipes — and all it does is add more things to the water that make it harder to purify. Cat waste from the litter box should also not be flushed, because the litter dehydrates the waste and toilets are meant to flush water soluble waste.

### 11. Hair

Like dental floss, hair forms a sort of net when you flush it down the drain and gets caught on basically everything — plus, it floats, and it never dissolves in water no matter how long it's in there, Agugliaro explained.

### 12. Gum

As you can probably imagine, chewing gum doesn't exactly break down in water, either. Plus, it's sticky and can easily adhere to the inside of your pipes and cause a clog. You should always throw gum out in the waste basket for this reason, according to Agugliaro.

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### 13. Cooking Grease

You probably already know that you shouldn't pour cooking grease down the drain, so it should make sense that the same goes for your toilet, too. Cooking grease congeals when it cools, which means it'll do the same in your pipes, according to Boulden Brothers.

### 14. Fish

It seems pretty standard that people flush pet fish when they die, but this is actually not a good idea — they don't break down in water, so flushing a fish or anything like it down the toilet can absolutely cause a clog. Stick to a proper burial instead, Agugliaro advised.

### 15. Food

This one might surprise you, because human waste is basically just broken-down food anyway, but flushing food that hasn't been digested can cause problems for your plumbing, too. Sure, it's biodegradable and will break down eventually, but it can cause clogs until that happens, according to Agugliaro.

### 16. Bleach

Perhaps the most surprising thing you shouldn't flush is bleach. It might be a part of your regular toilet cleaning routine, but bleach is actually too harsh a chemical for your toilet and septic system, according to Agugliaro, who noted that you can get the stains in your toilet out by using vinegar instead.

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