

# What not to flush

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## Heart of the Valley Metropolitan Sewerage District

Most people don't think twice when it comes to flushing the toilet to dispose of human waste. But you should think twice about doing the same with other items. Flushing certain household products, rather than tossing them in the garbage, can clog the plumbing system at your home, create problems at the wastewater treatment plant or even cause environmental problems.

Over the past few years, wastewater treatment facilities like Heart of the Valley Metropolitan Sewerage District have seen an increase in improper disposal of wipes, facial tissues and paper towels as people spent more time at home while adjusting to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The only things that should be disposed of through a toilet should be limited to human waste and toilet paper. That means you should avoid sending the following common household items down the toilet:

**"Flushable" wipes** — while the packing may say the wipes are flushable, wipes are actually slow to dissolve and cause clogging issues.

**Paper towels and facial tissue** — unlike toilet paper, paper towels and tissues are made to absorb

water, not dissolve in it, so they are more likely to block pipes and cause problems at the treatment plant.

**Swabs, cotton balls or rounds** — while they may seem to be small enough to flush, they don't break down in water and tend to build up inside pipes.

**Dental floss** — usually made of nylon or Teflon, dental floss doesn't break down easily in water, can build up over time and can wrap around other items that are flushed.

**Medicine** — medication should never be flushed; it can contribute to water pollution.

**Cigarettes** — cigarette butts can introduce potentially harmful chemicals into the wastewater treatment system.

**Kitty litter** — flushing cat litter and cat waste can be harmful to the environment while the litter can absorb water and clog pipes.

Other items on the "do not flush" list include bandages, nail clippings, chewing gum, contact lenses, feminine products, paint, bleach and hair as well as fats, oils and grease.

While it may seem convenient to flush some of these items, it is best to only flush the three P's...pee, poop and (toilet) paper. Those are the only things that are sure to break down before they arrive at our wastewater treatment facility.