

## METROPOLITAN COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

In response to Gov. Tim Walz's stay-at-home order, Metropolitan Council critical services continue to be available, though our facilities are closed to walk-in traffic and many staff are working remotely. All Council public meetings will be available for the public to follow remotely.

[More about the Met Council response to COVID-19](#)



Metropolitan Council - [metro council.org](http://metro council.org)

# RESIDENTS

## What Not To Flush

### What we flush impacts the environment

When we flush the wrong things down the toilet or drain, it creates problems for pipes and pumps in the wastewater system and can also harm the environment.

**These items should NOT go down the toilet or drain:**

- Wipes
- Tissues & paper towels
- Dental floss
- Tampons & sanitary pads
- Clumping cat litter
- Condoms
- Oil-based hand scrubs
- Cotton swabs and cotton balls
- Medicines
- Rags
- Oil or grease

**Bottom line: If it isn't toilet paper or doesn't come out of your body, throw it in the trash.**

#### "Flushable" wipes

Tossing so-called "flushable" wipes, paper towels, tissues, tampons, and other dense paper materials into the toilet could end up costing you quite a bundle.

These items do not biodegrade easily or quickly. Wipes and tampons can get stuck in the narrow sanitary sewer service pipe that connects homes and businesses to the city's wastewater collection system.

And if you pour grease or other congealing products down the kitchen sink, these attach to the wipes, causing "fatbergs" to form.

The result can be clogged pipes, sewage back-ups into homes, and potentially expensive repairs.



#### Pharmaceuticals and other chemicals

Flushing unwanted medications and household chemicals can harm populations of fish and other aquatic life found in our area rivers, even at very low levels.

These are referred to as **contaminants of emerging concern**, and their long-term effects are not fully understood.

Household hazardous wastes, such as unwanted paints, solvents, automotive chemicals, used motor oil, herbicides, and pesticides should not be flushed or poured down the drain.

#### Microplastics

Tiny pieces of plastic (<5mm) referred to as "microplastics" are being found throughout the environment and are a source of concern. Fish and other wildlife often mistake microplastics for food. These microplastics are even being found in our drinking water, including bottled water. Modern wastewater treatment does a good job removing most (~97%) microplastics, however this means that some microplastics are still entering our area rivers. Plastic fibers are the most common and troublesome form of microplastic, thousands of these microfbers can be shed each time clothing items made from synthetic materials are washed.

## What can you do?

- Visit the [Minnesota Pollution Control Agency website](#) for more information on how to properly dispose of unwanted over the counter and prescription medications.
- Check with your county and the [state of Minnesota](#) to learn where you can properly dispose of unwanted household hazardous waste.
- Avoid single-use plastics, such as water bottles, utensils, and shopping bags.
- Make sure whatever plastics you do use are recycled or put in the trash.
- Consider wearing more clothing made from natural fibers.

## More information

- [A humorous look at what not to flush](#)
- [Consumer Reports: Don't flush flushable wipes](#)
- [How to dispose of unwanted medications properly](#)
- [Water utilities issue joint international statement on nonflushable and 'flushable' labeled products](#)
- [Microplastics could pose big treatment risks](#)