



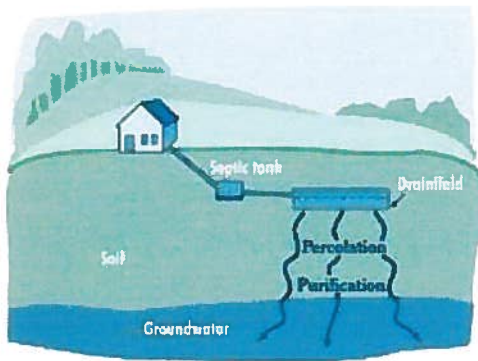
Private Well Owner Tip Sheet

March, 2016

Have a question?

Visit the wellcare® Hotline at 888-395-1033

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Septic system maintenance

Many water well owners also own a septic system used to treat household sewage. Properly sited and maintained septic systems are safe and reliable. Those not properly sited and maintained have the potential to fail and contaminate groundwater used as drinking water.

A typical system contains a septic tank, distribution box, and a rock-and-gravel-lined absorption field.

The tank's purpose is to temporarily hold wastewater until solids and liquids separate. The solids, or sludge, collects at the tank's bottom, while scum floats on top. The sludge and scum that remain in the tank need to be pumped out periodically.

The wastewater, or effluent, passes through the tank to the distribution box. The distribution box separates the flow of the water into a network of underground, perforated pipes in the absorption field. The effluent passes through the holes in the pipes into the rock-and-gravel zone where it is stored until absorbed by the soil.

Septic system dos and don'ts

1. All wastewater may go to the system, though "greywater" (wastewater *other than* from the toilet and kitchen sink) can be used for purposes as state or local regulations allow
2. Conserve water to avoid overloading the system, and repair leaky faucets and/or install low-flow fixtures
3. Don't use the system as a trash can for disposal of things other than what's normally in household wastewater—i.e., grease, disposable diapers, paper towels, paint, pesticides
4. Plant only grass over and near your septic system to avoid root systems that can clog and damage the absorption field
5. Keep roof drains, sump pump drains, and other rain or surface water drainage away from the absorption field as flooding can keep soil from naturally cleansing wastewater

For more information, visit the U.S. EPA's [SepticSmart Web site](#).

New app, well financing video coming

A new video on financing options for water well construction and maintenance will be available by the end of the month on www.WellOwner.org. In April, a new well owner app and corresponding online well owner's manual also will be available—giving well owners unprecedented ease in staying abreast of well maintenance and water testing needs.

The absorption field treats the wastewater through physical, chemical, and biological processes. The soil acts as a natural buffer to filter out bacteria, viruses, and excessive nutrients. If a septic system is designed, constructed, and maintained properly, the wastewater is treated before reaching the groundwater.

Septic system maintenance

The National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association (NOWRA) recommends the following septic system maintenance:

- Have your septic tank inspected every three to four years
- Pump if sludge fills the bottom third of the tank or if the scum layer is near the top of the outlet baffle

Signs that wastewater from your septic system could be reaching groundwater include:

- Wastewater backing up into household drains
- Bright green, spongy grass on the drainfield, even during dry weather
- Pooling water or muddy soil around your septic system or in your basement, and
- A strong odor around the septic tank and drainfield.

If you notice any of the preceding symptoms, call a septic professional to inspect your system.



The logo for Wellowner.org features the word "Wellowner.org" in a pink, sans-serif font. The letter "i" in "Well" is replaced by a blue icon of a water tap with a single drop of water falling into a glass. Below the text is a blue wavy line.

Don't know how to interpret water test results? Visit www.WellOwner.org to learn more about water testing. To access an online water test interpretation tool [click here](#).



The PrivateWellClass.org will be offering Well Care 101 on March 30 at 8:00 p.m. CDT. This free, live web-based class will help homeowners understand the basics of well care as well as how to determine whether their water is safe to drink.

Participants will learn maintenance best practices and receive answers to common questions. There will be an opportunity to submit questions in advance as well as live on the webinar. The webinar will be recorded.

[Click here](#) to register.



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www.wellowner.org

Informing consumers about groundwater and water wells.

National Ground Water Association

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