



**GARBAGE DISPOSALS**  
 Their disadvantages outweigh their convenience if you have a septic system! By increasing the accumulation of solids in the system you are shortening the life of your septic system!

**WARNING SIGNS OF A FAILING SYSTEM**

- 1) Sewage surfacing over the disposal field (especially after storms)
- 2) Slow draining toilets or drains
- 3) Sewage back-ups in the house
- 4) Sewage odors

If you observe any of these signs contact a reputable plumber or sewage contractor to investigate the problem. Call the Health Department with general questions or for a consultation.



**KEEP A RECORD OF INSTALLATION, PUMPING & MAINTENANCE FOR EASY REFERENCE**

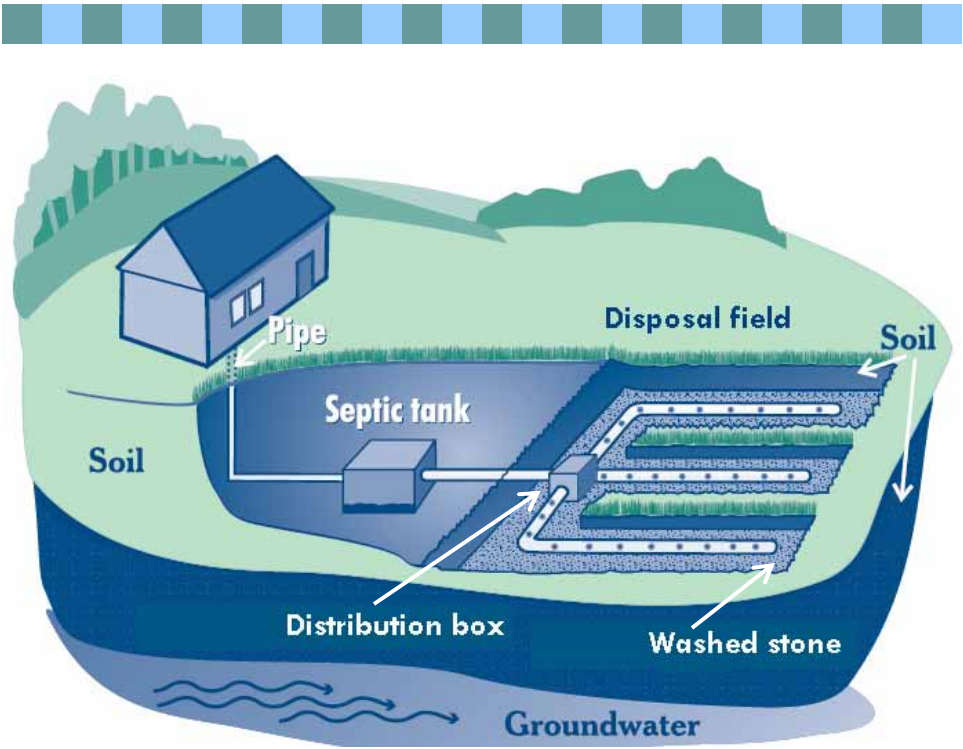
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CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

DUNKIRK (716) 366-8831 ♦ MAYVILLE 753-4481 ♦ JAMESTOWN 661-8110

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM

- ♦ Septic system vocabulary
- ♦ Helpful hints
- ♦ Warning signs of a failing system



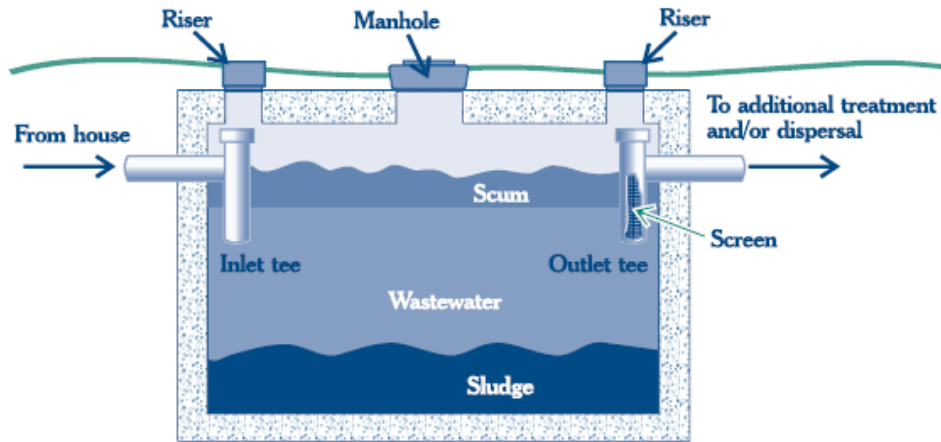
**A CONVENTIONAL SEPTIC SYSTEM**

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## SEPTIC SYSTEM VOCABULARY

**SEPTIC TANK** - Wastewater flows from the house into the septic tank where heavy solids separate from lighter solids and grease, this is the primary treatment process. Heavy solids settling to the bottom of the tank are partially decomposed by bacteria to form sludge. Lighter solids and grease float to the top to form a scum layer.



**BAFFLE (TEE)** - Scum and sludge are trapped in the septic tank by baffles, only wastewater that has undergone primary treatment flows out from the septic tank.

**DISTRIBUTION BOX** - From the tank, partially treated wastewater flows into a distribution box where the flow can be divided evenly into a network of disposal field trenches. Even flow distribution prevents overloading of any one part of the system.

**DISPOSAL FIELD** - From the distribution box, partially treated wastewater flows through perforated pipes into gravel lined trenches. Partially treated wastewater, or effluent, is further purified by filtration and decomposition (by microorganisms in the soil).

## AN IMPROPERLY MAINTAINED SYSTEM MAY-

- ◇ Cause serious health threats to your family & neighbors.
- ◇ Degrade the environment.
- ◇ Reduce your property value.
- ◇ Be expensive to repair.



## HELPFUL HINTS TO MAINTAIN YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM

- DO** Have your septic tank pumped every 2-3 yrs by a DEC licensed septic tank pumper.
- DO** Learn the location of your septic tank & disposal field. Keep a sketch.
- DO** Divert roof drains & surface water away from the system. Keep water from sump pumps, house footing drains & backwash from water softeners from entering the system.
- DO** Take leftover hazardous wastes to approved hazardous waste collection centers. Use bleach, disinfectants, drain/toilet bowl cleaners sparingly and in accordance with labels. Pouring harmful chemicals down the drain can kill the beneficial bacteria.

## DO CONSERVE WATER



- ◇ Repair leaking faucets/toilets.
- ◇ Run washing machines & dishwashers only when full.
- ◇ Use water saving features on faucets, shower heads & toilets. Avoid long showers.



**DON'T** Disturb the area over the drain field. The area should be covered with mowed grass only. Roots from trees (especially willows & soft maples) may clog drain lines.

**DON'T** Build sheds, decks, additions, swimming pools, etc. on/over the septic tank or drain field.

**DON'T** Allow anyone to drive or park over any part of the system.

**DON'T** Try to repair the system yourself. Use reputable contractors and remember you must obtain the proper health department permit.

**DON'T** Use commercial septic additives. These products usually don't help and may actually damage your system in the long-run.

**DON'T** Use toilets and drains as trash cans. **DON'T DUMP OR FLUSH NON-DEGRADABLES OR POISONS.** See back...