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How to keep a happy household during a pandemic? Keep the wipes out of pipes!

(Hampton Roads, Va., Feb. 10, 2021) – Until COVID-19 vaccines are in wide distribution, it looks like we will be working, learning and staying at home a little longer. Nothing ruins that cozy vibe quite like the “blub-blub-blub” of a backed up household drain. When pipes become clogged at home or in the neighborhood, wastewater can back up into toilets, tubs, sinks and streets. To avoid the mess and a hefty plumbing bill, experts from askHRgreen.org say knowing what *not* to flush makes all the difference.

“For starters, cotton swabs, dental floss and all-purpose disposable wipes should never be flushed, in addition to a laundry list of other offenders,” said Rebekah Eastep, a team leader with the askHRgreen.org public awareness initiative. “Only water, your personal business and toilet paper are okay to flush. Anything else can lead to clogged pipes and the inconvenience and cost of a visit from the plumber.”

During the pandemic, when toilet paper was often hard to find, many people turned to disposable personal hygiene wipes as an alternative. By design, disposable wipes do not break down in water like toilet paper—even those labeled “flushable.” Instead, they linger in household plumbing and wastewater systems, clogging up pipes and getting stuck in the mechanics at municipal pump stations.

These clogs can eventually build up, resulting in sewage backups in homes or sanitary sewer overflows in the street. Such overflows not only inconvenience Hampton Roads residents, they impact the environment by contaminating local waterways, harming wildlife and closing beaches.

What not to flush

As residents continue to share close quarters, Eastep and her team advise that residents know what not to flush. In addition to cotton swabs, dental floss and all-purpose wipes, the list

includes: cat litter, diapers and disposable diaper liners, facial tissues, family planning products, fats/oils/grease and food scraps from the kitchen, paper towels and personal hygiene products.

For more details and to take the askHRgreen.org “Toilet Trouper or Party Pooper” online quiz, visit <https://askhrgreen.org/pipes>.

Never flush these products down the toilet:

All-purpose wipes – *even if they are labeled “flushable”*

Cat litter

Cotton swabs

Diapers and disposable diaper lines

Dental floss

Facial tissues

Family planning products

Fats, oils, and grease from the kitchen

Food scraps from the kitchen

Paper towels

Personal hygiene products

What you can flush:

Water

Toilet paper

Your personal business

About askHRgreen.org askhrgreen.org is your go-to resource for all things green in Hampton Roads – from recycling tips and pointers for keeping local waterways clean to water-saving ideas and simple steps to make local living easy on the environment. Launched in 2011, the region-wide public awareness and education campaign is administered through the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission and powered by the following members: The cities of Chesapeake, Franklin, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach, and Williamsburg; the counties of Gloucester, Isle of Wight, James City, Southampton, Surry and York; the town of Smithfield; and HRSD. Like askHRgreen.org on [Facebook](#), follow on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), tune in to [YouTube](#) and catch the “Let’s Talk Green” [blog](#), written by a team of local experts.