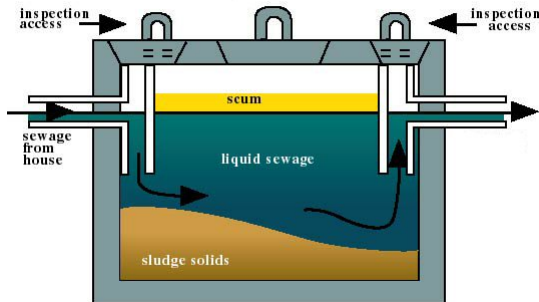


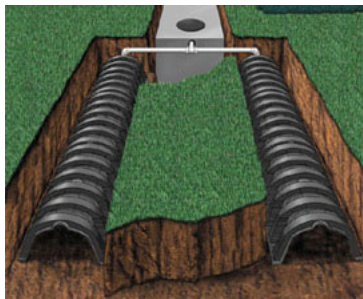
## How your system works

Your septic system consists of a tank and field. The septic tank is a watertight underground container that receives, treats, and settles human wastes. The drainfield or leachfield is made up of a network of pipes with holes in them, buried in gravel and soil.

The waste from your home enters the tank where the scum and solids are separated from the liquid. The solids settle to the bottom where bacteria work to break them down and turn them into sludge.



The liquids flow from the tank to the field. The wastewater flows out the holes in the pipes into the surrounding soil. It filters through the soil while naturally occurring bacteria break it down further before it reaches the watertable. In a properly working septic system, the wastewater should be fully treated by the time it reaches the watertable.



## For more information

**Vancouver Island Health Authority**  
4th Floor-238 Government Street  
Duncan, BC V9L 1A5  
Phone: 250-737-2010  
[www.viha.ca](http://www.viha.ca)

**Applied Science Technologists & Technicians of BC**  
10167-148th Street  
Surrey, BC V3R 0S4  
Phone 1-877-456-7697  
<http://owrp.asttbc.org>

**BC Ministry of Health**  
1515 Blanshard Street  
Victoria, BC V8W 3C8  
Phone: 250-952-1501  
[http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/protect/lup\\_index.html](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/protect/lup_index.html)  
<http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile21.stm>

**Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia**  
200 - 4010 Regent Street  
Burnaby, BC V5C 6N2  
Phone: 1-888-430-8035  
[www.apeg.bc.ca/members/sewerageprolist.html](http://www.apeg.bc.ca/members/sewerageprolist.html)

**BC Onsite Sewage Association**  
201 - 3542 Blanshard Street  
Victoria, BC V8X 1W3  
Phone: 1-866-391-8442  
[www.bcossa.com](http://www.bcossa.com)

**Municipality of North Cowichan**  
7030 Trans Canada Highway  
Box 278 Duncan, BC V9L 3X4  
Phone: 250-746-3100  
[www.northcowichan.bc.ca](http://www.northcowichan.bc.ca)

This project was undertaken with the financial support of:  
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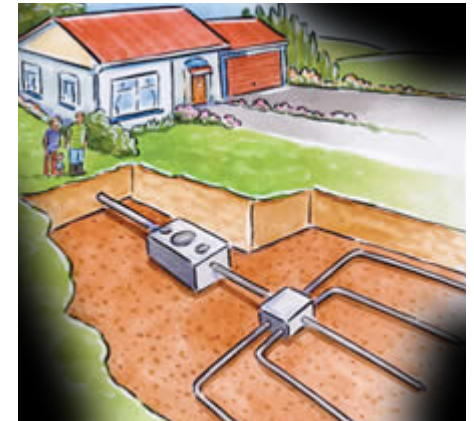


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# Septic Sense

## Making Sense of Your Septic System



## A Guide for Watershed Residents



*Created by the Quamichan Stewards  
...committed to improving the health  
of the Quamichan watershed*

## Regular maintenance is the key...

It is important to know the location of your tank and drainfield.

Be sure to check the operation of your system annually and look for signs of failure. Signs of failure might include sewage seeping out above the drainage field, lush green or soggy areas over the drainage field, and possibly sewage odours around the property.

By pumping your tank once every 3 to 5 years you will ensure that it is working properly. Pumping out the tank will prevent sludge and scum from entering the drainfield which can cause waste to back up and leak out of the system into your house, lawn, groundwater or nearby waterbodies.



## Conserving Water

Too much water in your system will flush solids in to the drainfield before the solids can settle out. These simple steps to conserve water will help increase the efficiency of your system and extend its life.

- Reduce the number of times you flush the toilet.
- Replace older toilets with low flush or dual flush models.
- Install aerators on your kitchen and bathroom faucets or replace them with water efficient models.
- Only run dishwashers and washing machine when full.
- Install a water efficient showerhead and reduce the time you spend in the shower, or turn the water off between washing and rinsing.



## Green Cleaners

Say goodbye to expensive, harsh chemical cleaners. Make the switch to more natural, inexpensive, chemical free cleaners such as vinegar, baking soda, borax and lemon juice.

If used correctly these septic friendly cleaners work just as well or even better than commercial cleaners. You will be helping the bacteria in your septic tank and reducing water pollution in your watershed.

For more information please visit:

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/consumers/green-clean.html>

[http://www.canadianliving.com/life/green\\_living/natural\\_and\\_cheap\\_household\\_cleaners.php](http://www.canadianliving.com/life/green_living/natural_and_cheap_household_cleaners.php)



## Remember

- Have your tank pumped and inspected every 3 to 5 years.
- Use environmentally friendly, phosphate free cleaners.
- Practice water conservation by limiting the number of high water use activities done at the same time, for example spread laundry loads throughout the week.
- Do not drive or plant large bushes or trees on your drainfield.
- Don't use septic tank additives. These harm the healthy bacteria that are working to digest the sludge in your system.



**By maintaining your septic system and using the tips in this brochure you will:**

**Save money**

**Protect the health of your family**

**and**

**Preserve water quality in your watershed**