

What can I put down my kitchen sink?

We of course all want to be good stewards of the environment, and to also take good care of the pipes in our homes. If your home is hooked up to sewer service, what goes down your kitchen sink will come through the sanitary sewer system in your home, pass through your local municipality's pipes and sewer system, then continue into NEW Water's "interceptors" (larger connecting pipes), and onward to one of our two treatment facilities to be processed for pollution removal, cleaned, and sent back into the environment.

What you put down the kitchen sink directly impacts our public health, shared waterways, and can also lead to a sewer backup in your own home. NEW Water serves about 238,000 residents throughout Northeast Wisconsin. This shared community resource is one we can all help to protect, so that it can better serve our visitors, businesses, and families.

Generally speaking, it is OK to put small scraps of biodegradable food waste into a kitchen garbage disposal, provided there is no fats, oils, or grease (FOG). Small food scraps are an organic matter that can help aid in anaerobic digestion, a resource recovery process NEW Water uses to produce electricity, as well as to recover and reuse heat. However, **it is critical that fats, oils, and grease are never put down the kitchen drain, or any drain**, as it can clog pipes in your home, as well as cause equipment problems in both your municipal system, and the NEW Water system. Pots, pans, plates, cookware, dinnerware, etc. should be scraped or wiped into the trash before putting them into the dishwasher as well, to remove any oil / grease residue. (Remember, the wastewater from the dishwasher eventually goes into the same pipes as your kitchen sink.)

What if I am on a septic system?

If you are on a septic system in Northeast Wisconsin, it is highly likely that the hauled waste will come to NEW Water to be treated. Therefore, all of this applies to you as well.

A few tips for using a garbage disposal:

- Never pour fats, oils, grease down the drain
- Never put coffee grounds down the drain
- Never put pharmaceuticals down any drain ([learn how to safely disposal of medications in Wisconsin here](#))
- Only put small pieces of biodegradable food into the garbage disposal
 - Do not put anything else like plastic, paper, cigarette butts, harsh chemicals, or anything combustible
- Grind food with a steady stream of cold water
- If you live in an apartment or condo, you may wish to check with management to ask their policy / preferences on putting food into the kitchen garbage disposal

What do I do with chemicals, paint, and other household hazardous wastes?

- Never pour these items down a kitchen sink, or any drain.
- Below is a chart from the Water Environment Federation (WEF) which covers environmentally friendly ways of proper disposal for many household items.
- In Northeast Wisconsin, properly dispose of Household Hazardous Waste at [Brown County Resource Recovery](#)

Additional resources

- [“Garbage Disposals and Food Waste: Do's and Don'ts,”](#) City of Thousand Oaks Sustainability Blog
- [“The essential garbage disposal guide to maintenance and cleaning,”](#) The Washington Post
- [“Quick Tips – what to put in the garbage disposal,”](#) American Home Shield
- [Household waste chart,](#) WEF



Image credit: [Consumer Reports](#)

HOUSEHOLD WASTE CHART*			
<p>The following chart from the Water Environment Federation will show you effective ways to dispose of household waste and contribute to a sustainable clean environment.</p> <p>Blue waves ~ indicate products which can be poured down the drain with plenty of water. If you have a septic tank, additional caution should be exercised when dumping these items down the drain. In fact, because septic systems rely on healthy bacteria, there are certain chemical substances that cannot be used with them. Be sure to read the labels to determine if a product could damage septic systems.</p>			
KITCHEN	TYPE OF WASTE DISPOSAL		
Aluminum cleaners		~	
Ammonia-based cleaners		~	
Bug sprays			⊗
Drain cleaners			⊗
Egg shells		~	
Floor care products			⊗
Furniture polish			⊗
Metal polish with solvent			⊗
Window cleaner		~	
Oven cleaner (lye base)			⊗
Fats, oils and grease (including oil from turkey fryers)		~	
BATHROOM	TYPE OF WASTE DISPOSAL		
Bathroom cleaners		~	
Diapers (baby wipes)		~	
Disinfectants		~	
Toilet bowl cleaner		~	
Tub and tile cleaners			⊗
Pharmaceutical products or drugs (expired or unused)		~	
Personal care products (aftershave, perfumes, deodorants, permanent or other lotions, hair relaxers, nail polish, dyes, waxes)		~	
Sharps (needles for diabetics)			⊗
GARDEN	TYPE OF WASTE DISPOSAL		
Fertilizer			⊗
Fungicide			⊗
Herbicide			⊗
Insecticide			⊗
Rat poison			⊗
Weed killer			⊗
GARAGE	TYPE OF WASTE DISPOSAL		
Antifreeze			⊗
Automatic transmission fluid			⊗
Auto body repair products			⊗
Battery acid (or battery)			⊗
Brake fluid			⊗
Car wax with solvent			⊗
Diesel fuel			⊗
Fuel additives			⊗
Fuel oil			⊗
Gasoline			⊗
Kerosene			⊗
Metal polish with solvent			⊗
Motor oil			⊗
Other oils			⊗
WORKSHOP	TYPE OF WASTE DISPOSAL		
Cutting oil			⊗
Deck cleaners/stains			⊗
Glue (solvent based)			⊗
Glue (water based)		~	
Paint (latex)		~	
Paint (oil based)			⊗
Paint (auto)			⊗
Paint (model)			⊗
Paint brush cleaner with solvent			⊗
Paint brush cleaner with TSP		~	
Paint stripper			⊗
Paint stripper (lye base)			⊗
Paint thinner			⊗
Primer			⊗
Rust remover (with phosphoric acid)			⊗
WORKSHOP, Cont.	TYPE OF WASTE DISPOSAL		
Turpentine			⊗
Varnish			⊗
Wood preservative			⊗
MISCELLANEOUS	TYPE OF WASTE DISPOSAL		
Aerosol cans (empty)		~	
Aerosol cans (not empty)			⊗
Ammunition			⊗
Artists' paints (acrylic)		~	
Artists' paints (oil based)			⊗
Cat litter		~	
Cellular phones			⊗
Dry cleaning solvents			⊗
Fiberglass epoxy			⊗
Gun cleaning solvents			⊗
Lighter fluid			⊗
Mercury batteries			⊗
Moth balls			⊗
Old fire alarms			⊗
Fluorescent light bulbs			⊗
Pet care products (flea and tick repellent)		~	
Photographic chemicals			⊗
Shoe polish			⊗
Swimming pool chemicals			⊗
White-out (used for corrections)		~	

Yellow triangles ▼ indicate materials which should not be poured down the drain, but can be safely disposed of in a sanitary landfill or incinerator. Note that medicines can often be taken to a community drug take-back program or mixed with undesirable substances such as kitty litter or coffee grounds. Pills (except narcotics) can also be dissolved and mixed with regular trash. Be sure the material is properly contained before it is put out for collection or carried to the landfill.

The red octagons ⊗ indicate hazardous wastes or materials that should be saved for a community-wide collection day or given to a licensed hazardous waste contractor when left over or unused. (Even the empty containers should be taken to a licensed contractor if one is available.)

Green leaves ♻ indicate material that can be recycled or reused or shared with neighbors or family members. If there is a recycling program in your area, take the materials there. If not, encourage local officials to start a recycling program.

*The information contained in this chart is intended as a general guideline. Laws and regulations may vary from state to state. For more information on the safest way to dispose of these and other products, contact your area's solid and hazardous waste department or federal or state environmental agency. Check manufacturer's label for specific disposal guidelines.

~ — Can be poured down the drain with plenty of water.
 ▼ — Cannot be poured down the drain, but can be safely disposed of in a sanitary landfill or incinerator.
 ⊗ — Hazardous wastes.
 ♻ — Recycle, reuse, or share.

Image credit: [WEF Household waste chart](#)