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How to Care for Indoor Toilets

Cooperative Extension Service
South Dakota State University

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How to Care for Indoor Toilets

Cooperative Extension Service
South Dakota State University, Brookings
U. S. Department of Agriculture

Take care of the indoor toilet and all other bathroom equipment. An indoor bathroom makes living easier and safer for you and your family.

THINGS YOU MAY NEED

You will not always have or need all of these tools to repair or take care of your indoor toilet. But it would be a good idea to write down next to the drawings the person or place that might have one or more of them available.



Plunger or "plumber's friend"



Piece of wire to hook into and pull out objects caught in the drain



Adjustable wrench



Packing or new washers for use in stopping leaks in the flush tank



A "snake" made of steel to use in pushing sludge through the drain

"How to Care for Indoor Toilets" is especially adapted for use in this series from a similar publication of the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare—Public Health Service.

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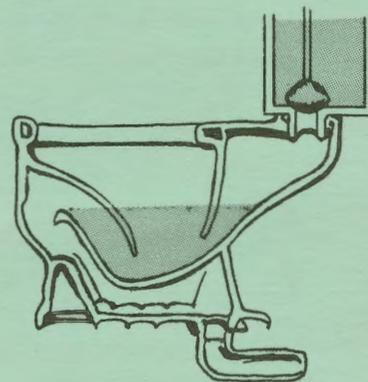
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The indoor toilet has two main parts . . .

The Stool and the Flush Tank

First we'll discuss what to do about a stopped up toilet. The last part of this section of the Home User's Manual tells about taking care of the flush tank.

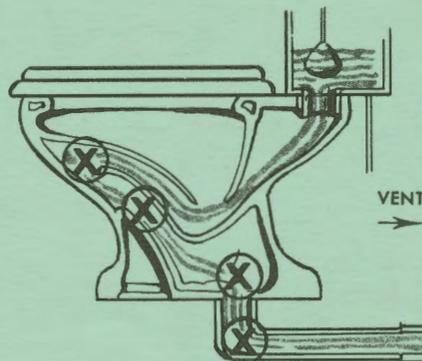
You should clean the outside of both the stool and the flush tank every day. Use a damp cloth and a cleanser powder as you use in the kitchen. At least once a week use a long handle brush and the cleanser on the inside of the stool.



If we were to cut the stool in half it would look like this. The darker areas represent the water in the stool and flush tank.

When the handle of the flush tank is turned (that is, when the toilet is "flushed"), the water comes down and pushes or flushes the water and waste in the stool on down the drain.

Two Things Which Can Stop the Toilet from Draining—



1—

The several places marked with a circled "X" (that look like this ) are those where an object can become stuck. If this happens the toilet will not flush properly. Sometimes the water overflows onto the floor.

(The flush tank can also give you trouble. See the last part of this section for information about the flush tank.)

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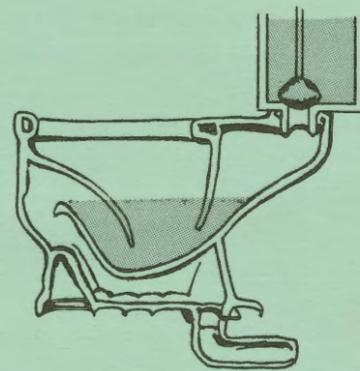
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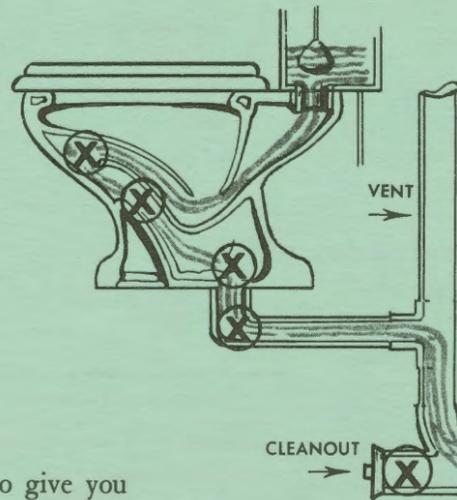
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Sometimes the drain pipe from the toilet to the main sewer line will begin to stop up. Water from the toilet will flush slowly or not drain.

(The flush tank can also give you trouble. See the last part of this section for information about the flush tank.)

What to Do If You Have Trouble With the Toilet Stool

If you have trouble with the toilet stool, first try to decide where the trouble may be.

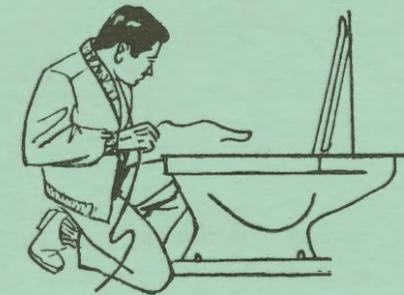
• If your sink drain works all right but the toilet stool does not flush in the proper manner, there is probably something stuck in the stool.

• If none of the drains work right, then the trouble is probably a clogged drain.

The "plumber's friend" or plunger is placed inside the stool and pumped up and down against the bottom. This forces water down the drain and often will force the drain open.



Sometimes objects like toys, pencils or sanitary napkins get in the toilet by mistake. In this case the plunger may not be of much help. Make a hook on the end of a wire. Poke the wire with the hook into the stool and try to pull out the object.



The best way to clean a clogged drain is with the metal "snake." The snake can be pushed down the drain through the toilet bowl or through the clean-out plug near the toilet, or through the vent pipe on the roof.

If the stool is still stopped up, get the help of a plumber.

Remember:

Make sure that nothing goes into the toilet that may stop it up. Teach children how to use the toilet. Make sure they understand the importance of keeping objects such as pencils and toys away from the toilet stool.

MAIN SEWER LINE

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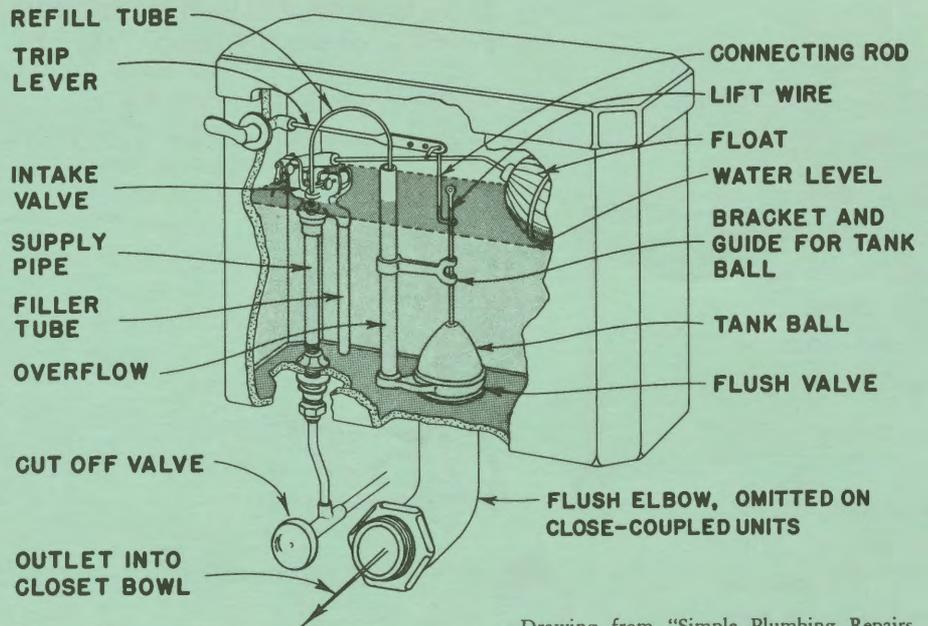


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The Flush Tank

This is how the inside of a common type of flush tank looks. The flushing mechanism in most flush tanks are like this or nearly so. Look at the various parts in the drawing and then see if you can find similar parts in your flush tank. Refer to the drawing when reading instructions below.

There are two major parts in the common type flush tank—the **INTAKE VALVE** and the **FLUSH VALVE**. Sometimes these valves will leak and must be fixed.



—Drawing from "Simple Plumbing Repairs for the Home and Farmstead," Farmer's Bulletin No. 2202, U. S. Department of Agriculture, October 1970.

Does the **FLUSH VALVE** Leak?

If you are not sure, it is not hard to find out. Take the lid off the flush tank. Use a pencil to mark how high the water is on the inside of the tank. Now turn off the water to the tank. Wait for 2 or more hours, then look at the pencil mark inside the tank. If the water is below this mark you need to adjust or replace the **FLUSH VALVE**.

The **FLUSH VALVE**

The rubber flush valve is round and is at the bottom of the flush tank. You can buy replacements at hardware and variety stores. To replace the flush valve: **FIRST, TURN OFF THE WATER**. Then lift up the wire rod which connects the flush handle (trip lever) to the flush valve. Unscrew the old valve and replace with the new. The trip lever or lift wire may corrode and fail to work smoothly, or the lift wire may bind in the guides. Disassemble and clean off corrosion or replace parts as necessary.

Does the **INTAKE (or FLOAT) VALVE** Leak?

Look for a metal tube in the flush tank, usually found near the flush valve. It is about as big around as a quarter. This is an overflow pipe. If the intake

valve is functioning properly, then the end of the tube will be above the water level in the flush tank. But if water is running into this tube, then you know something is wrong with the intake valve.

The **INTAKE VALVE**

The round ball in the flush tank is the float. When water comes up in the tank, the float rises. Since it is connected with the float rod, it pushes the other end of the rod as well as the valve stem down—thus closing the valve.

Be sure the ball is in good condition, does not leak, and that it floats on top of the water. (If it is a brass float ball and does not float or has water inside, sometimes it can be removed, drained of water, and the leak soldered. Other types of faulty float ball (plastic) must be replaced.)

If the float is all right but does not close the valve, then you should replace the washer on the intake valve. To do this, first **TURN OFF THE WATER** and drain the tank (by flushing). Then remove the float rod. Next lift out the valve stem. The washer, and perhaps the packing, on the valve stem should be replaced.