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FOG. A pain in every drain!

Solution? Cool it, scrape it, green bin it.

Fats, oils and grease (FOG) are a common problem for many businesses, condominiums/highrise buildings and homeowners. If they are poured down the drain, they will cool in the pipe, harden and eventually cause a blockage. This can be very costly as it can cause sewage to back up into a building, house or business. The easiest way to prevent blockages from forming is to stop FOG from getting into the pipes in the first place.

Proper disposal of FOG, personal hygiene products and unwanted pharmaceuticals will help reduce the amount of pollutants entering our local streams and lakes. With a bit of

education on how to correctly dispose of these products, we can work together to keep our waterways clean, reduce the chance of a future blockage and keep the cost of repairs lower for your condo corporation.

This article provides information on how to properly dispose of fats, oils and grease. Please use it to educate residents within your condominium.

Fats, oils and grease should never go down the drain

FOG is a byproduct of cooking and includes:

- Meats
- Cooking oils

- Shortening
- Lard
- Butter or margarine
- Dairy products (includes cheese, milk and cream)
- Sauces (gravy, cheese sauce, cream sauce)
- Salad dressings
- Marinades
- Sandwich spreads
- Baked goods

Cool it, scrape it, green bin it

In York Region, fats, oils and grease are organic waste that can go into the green bin once they are cooled. The easiest way to dispose of FOG is to let

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it cool and harden in either the pan or a heat-resistant container and then scrape it into the green bin, or, if your condo doesn't have a green bin, it can be disposed of in the garbage.

Oils that don't harden when cooled can be dropped off at a York Region waste depot.

Small amounts of cooking oil can be placed in the green bin or garbage. It is recommended that cooking oil be added along with something absorbent such as bread or a paper towel. If you have large amounts of cooking oil, it can be dropped off in a tightly sealed container, no more than four litres in size, at one of the depots listed at the end of the article.

It might be a good idea to have a designated collection area within the condo and then rotate the responsibility of dropping it off at a depot. Just keep in mind there is a drop off limit of four litres per day per person.

Water and oil don't mix

Using hot water, soap or other chemicals when putting fats, oils or grease down the drain will not prevent them from hardening in the pipes. FOG will eventually cool and harden in the pipe even when hot water, soaps or chemicals are used.

Flushing fats, oils and grease down the toilet will still cause a blockage

Wastewater from every toilet, drain, shower, sink, dishwasher and/or bathtub is connected to a single sewer pipe. Fats, oils and grease harden in pipes and sanitary sewers causing costly blockages and potential damage to the system and/or your residence.

FOG isn't the only culprit for clogged pipes

Cotton swabs, dental floss, facial tissues, sanitary products, paper towels, condoms and "flushable" wipes all contribute to clogged pipes. These products do not break down in our wastewater system and should be put into the green bin or garbage for disposal, regardless of whether they claim to be "flushable."

Unwanted medications and prescriptions should be taken back to your local pharmacy

Traces of pharmaceuticals are being detected in rivers, lakes, drinking water and soil. One of the ways they get into the environment is when medications and other personal care products are thrown in the garbage, flushed down the toilet or put down the sink. Taking preventative action by disposing of pharmaceuticals safely helps protect our drinking water sources and our ecosystems.

Take back your waste pharmaceuticals and sharps to your local participating pharmacy or waste depot for proper disposal. Most pharmacies in York Region will take back unused or expired pharmaceuticals. ■

Mary Hemmingway is Water Efficiency and Conservation Coordinator, The Regional Municipality of York.

For more information or to access online resources, visit York.ca/fog. Educational materials can also be requested by phone at 1-877-464-9675.

York Region Cooking Oil Drop-Off Locations

East Gwillimbury Household Hazardous Waste and Recycling Depot*
225 Garfield Wright Boulevard
Town of East Gwillimbury

Georgina Transfer Station, Household Hazardous Waste and Recycling Depot*
23068 Warden Avenue
Town of Georgina

Markham Household Hazardous Waste Depot*
Rodick Road, South of Miller Avenue
City of Markham

McCleary Court Community Environmental Centre
130 McCleary Court
City of Vaughan

Elgin Mills Community Environmental Centre
1124 Elgin Mills Road East
Town of Richmond Hill

For hours and additional information please visit york.ca/wastedepots

*Indicates that the depot also accepts unwanted pharmaceuticals

Editor's note: Check online for specific disposal requirements and regulations for your region/municipality.