

# About Your Drinking Water and Septic System

## Westport's drinking water comes from local reservoirs and wells, right?

Yeah, but our drinking water is also recycled wastewater.

## So, am I drinking wastewater????

Yes, we all are. *All water* is recycled!

## Yuk!

Wait a second! It's really not bad at all... once you know how everything works.

## OK, OK, OK, tell me more ...

If you have a septic system, wastewater from your house flows into it, then soaks into the ground, then goes into an aquifer.

## What the heck is an aquifer?

Aquifers are underground layers of rock, gravel, and other stuff in which water collects and is stored.

The good news is, when septic systems are properly maintained, they actually help the environment through "Groundwater Recharge." (see "Science Lesson" below)

You with me?

## Yup, keep going--

Your septic system is your private underground wastewater treatment system!

Here's how it works:

- Sewage drains from your house into the septic tank where solids are trapped.
- Then the wastewater flows into the drainfield.
- From there, it seeps into the soil and is sanitized by microbes before recharging the aquifer.

## Awesome!

But if you've got a failing system (or if there's a failing system in your neighborhood), it can contaminate the water supply.

This poses a threat to your and your neighbors' health.

A failing septic system can significantly reduce the value of your property and cost \$\$\$\$ to replace.

But caring for your septic system will extend its life and may save you thousands of dollars.

## So, how do I know if my septic system is failing?

Some obvious signs are:

- Sewage bubbling up in your yard
- Lush grass right above the system
- Slow-draining toilets or drains
- It stinks !



## Science Lesson

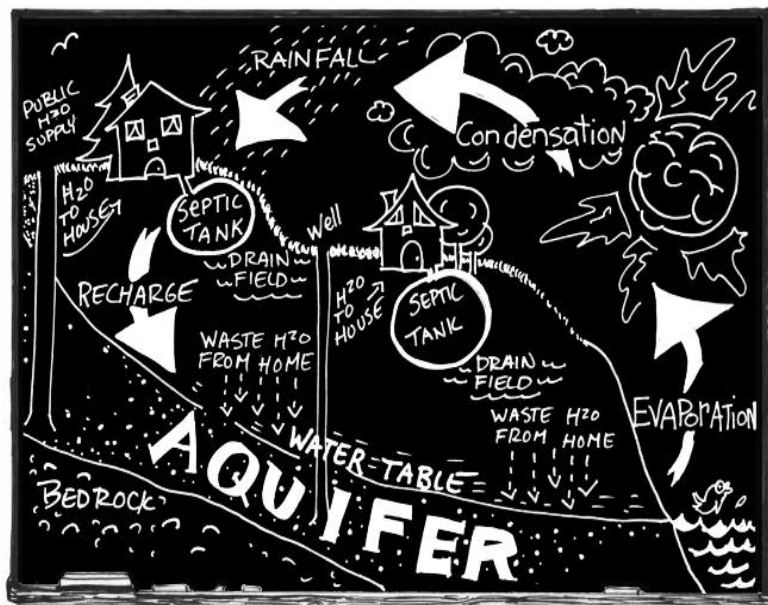
### The Water Cycle

The Earth's water supply is finite.

Water soaks into soil, bedrock and waterways after it falls as rain or snow.

Some water is purified as it percolates through the ground. Some evaporates to form clouds. Some travels in creeks, streams and rivers to other water bodies like Long Island Sound.

This natural water cycle helps to continuously clean the earth's water supply.



### Groundwater Recharge

Neighborhoods with septic systems benefit the environment.

Wastewater processed in septic systems recharges (replenishes) the local water table and aquifer.

By contrast, wastewater that enters the town sewer system goes to the wastewater treatment plant, and after processing there, goes directly into Long Island Sound. *It does not remain in the neighborhood in which it was used.*

## Information & Resources

For more information about septic systems and their maintenance, contact:

### Westport Weston Health District (WWHD)

180 Bayberry Lane, Westport, CT 06880-2855  
203-227-9571  
www.wwhd.org

a governmental agency that provides public health services to the residents of Westport and Weston

Programs include environmental health, prevention of disease, health promotion and public education.

Open M-F, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

No appointment necessary.

### Westport Conservation Department

110 Myrtle Ave. - Room 205, Westport, CT 06880  
203-341-1170 • www.westportct.gov

the primary environmental division of Westport town government

Its objective is to protect, preserve and improve the town's natural resources, especially its wetlands, watercourses, floodplains and aquifers.

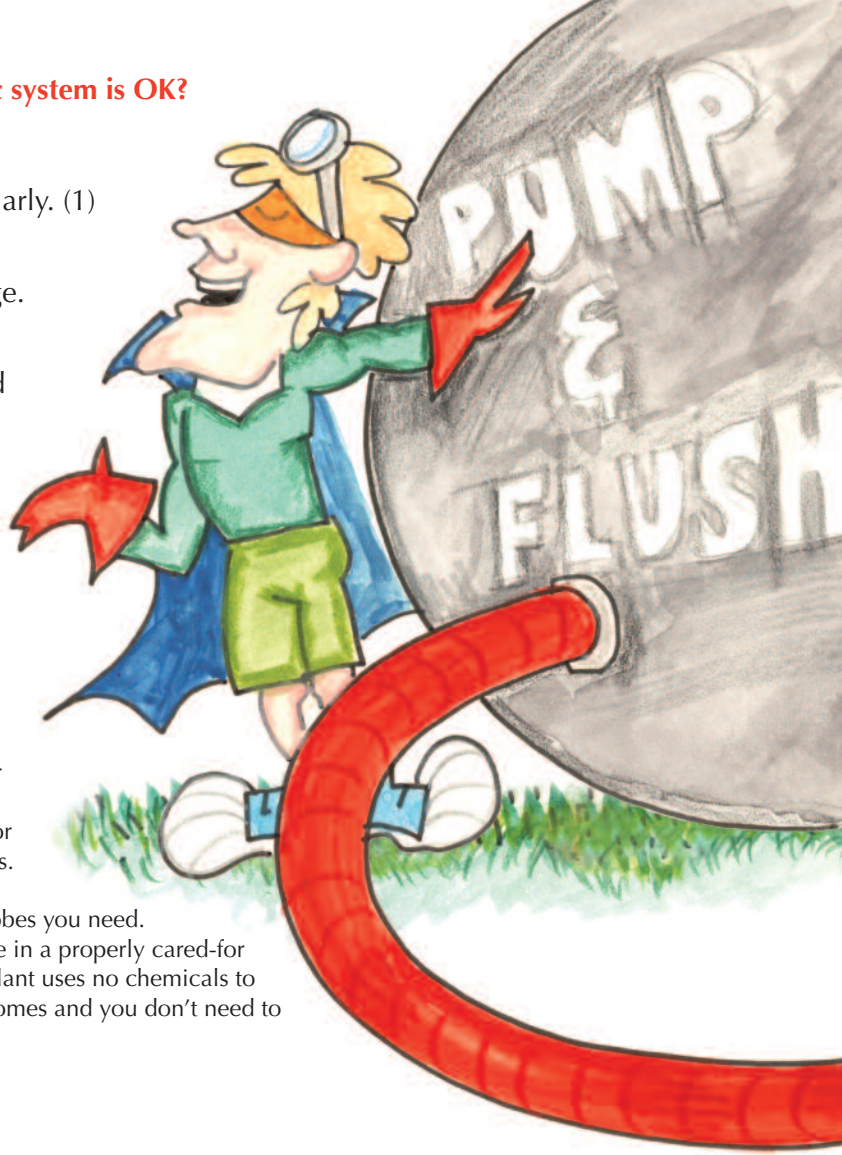
**If I don't have any of these signs, can I assume my septic system is OK?**

Not necessarily! Here are some DOs and DON'Ts --

- **Do** get the sludge in your septic tank pumped out regularly. (1)
- **Do** know where your septic tank and drainfield are. Keep them clear of tree roots and provide good drainage. Don't compact the earth over them.
- **Don't** dump harmful stuff like oil, paint thinner, unused medications or pesticides into toilets or drains.
- **Don't** toss coffee grounds or non-degradables such as cat litter, grease, personal hygiene products, or paper towels into toilets or drains.
- **Don't** use septic additives -- not even enzymes. They can harm and even destroy the beneficial microbes in the system. (2)

(1) usually every 2-5 years...depends on the size of your household, the size of your septic system and the frequency of use. Contact Westport Weston Health District for advice and a list of licensed septic pumpers.

(2) Nature provides all the necessary microbes you need. They do a great job if you leave them alone in a properly cared-for system. Westport's wastewater treatment plant uses no chemicals to purify wastewater coming from sewered homes and you don't need to use them in your septic system either.



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**Are YOU drinking recycled wastewater?**

