



After the Drain





Hello!

I think you know what I do.



But, do you know what happens after you flush?

Or after you use the sink?



Or shower?



The water has to go somewhere, right?





Well, it's called wastewater,
or sewage, and it all goes
to the same place.

It travels through underground pipes to treatment plants. And that's where the real work begins.



Now, I'm first to admit that I have it pretty easy.



Sure, I have to put up with some nasty smells and funny noises...

An illustration of a yellow toilet seat and bowl. Inside the bowl, there is a white plastic bag, a green tube of ointment, and a white tissue. To the left of the toilet, there is a red bandage and a pair of white cotton buds. A clipboard with a white sheet of paper is positioned to the right of the toilet. The paper has text and a list of items with checkmarks or crosses.

...and don't get me started
on when people flush the
wrong things, like rubbish,
bandages or cotton buds.

Plastic bags



Tissues



Bandages



Cotton buds





But that's nothing compared to what treatment plants have to do.

First, they put the wastewater through big screens, like sieves, to remove any rubbish and debris such as bandages, plastic bags, cotton buds and other things that shouldn't be there.



Like I said, don't get me started!



Then, they pump the wastewater into sedimentation tanks, which separate it into different parts.



Grease and oils float to the top and are removed while sludge settles on the bottom.




You might think sludge sounds pretty gross,
so I'll use its scientific name – biosolids.



Biosolids are turned into compost or used in other ways, like fertilising farmlands to help crops grow.




The wastewater that's left behind is put through another filter to remove any remaining solids.

An illustration showing a cross-section of a wastewater treatment tank. The top part is a teal color representing the water surface. Below it is a brown wavy line representing the water level. The main body of the tank is a light orange color. Numerous light blue bubbles of various sizes are scattered throughout the orange area, representing air being blown through the water. Some of the larger bubbles have small brown dots on their surface, representing suspended solids.

This involves blowing air bubbles through a filter to help break down solids and separate them out.

This is called aeration.



It's then cleaned using sunlight and chlorine

to kill bacteria and germs.



Ah, there's nothing like
a good clean to lift your
lid... I mean spirits.



Then the water can be safely released into rivers or the sea.





Or it can be sent on for more treatment and cleaning.
If only the people in my life were as serious about cleaning!

With further treatment, it can be recycled and used again in all sorts of ways, like watering farm crops, cooling machinery, or watering sports fields.



So next time you flush, have a shower or use the sink, be grateful someone else is cleaning up after you and doing all the hard work involved in wastewater treatment.



And please, turn the light off on your way out...



...and leave a toilet in peace.



The End

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Advice



www.smartwateradvice.org



Hello, I'm your Loo. I'm going to tell you a story about what happens to the water when you flush or use the sink. You'll be quite surprised, it may not go where you think!

Written by Bridget Cull and illustrated by Digital Media Design students at Swinburne University of Technology.



Advice

