

# Healthy Home

Tips for Homeowners to Save Money, Protect Lake Erie,  
and Do Better Environmentally



PROVIDED BY THE NORTHEAST OHIO REGIONAL SEWER DISTRICT


# Cheaper, Safer, Cleaner: A Healthy Home Guide

Wondering how to safely dispose of certain home chemicals or waste products?

Want to be a better steward of the environment, our region, and Lake Erie?

Want to save some money by opting for natural cleaning alternatives?

Our *Healthy Home* book offers quick and easy tips for homeowners and property owners across Northeast Ohio.

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- Safely dispose of different types of materials.
  - Contribute to better water quality for Lake Erie and throughout Northeast Ohio.
  - Make changes that can lead to a lower sewer bill.
  - Need answers quickly? Visit [neorsd.org](https://neorsd.org) or [@neorsd](https://twitter.com/neorsd) for the most up-to-date information, or contact us at (216) 881-8247.

# Money Down the Drain

Saving resources in turn saves you money. Often, our customers don't even realize their homes and habits are contributing to wasted water and higher bills. It adds up!



## 6K GALLON/MONTH

The bathroom is where most of the water in a home is used. Old-fashioned toilets account for an average of 27% of household water usage, using 5 to 7 gallons per flush.

A leaky toilet can waste up to 200 gallons of water per day or **6,000 gallons a month!**



## +2K GALLON/YEAR

A dripping faucet can waste thousands of gallons a year.

The U.S. Geological Survey has an [online drip calculator](#) where you can enter your sink's "drips per minute" and see how much water a leaky faucet can waste.



## 6K GALLON/MONTH

Turning the water off while brushing your teeth, shaving, or washing your face could save up to 8 gallons of water, adding up to an impressive [200 gallons a month](#) saved.



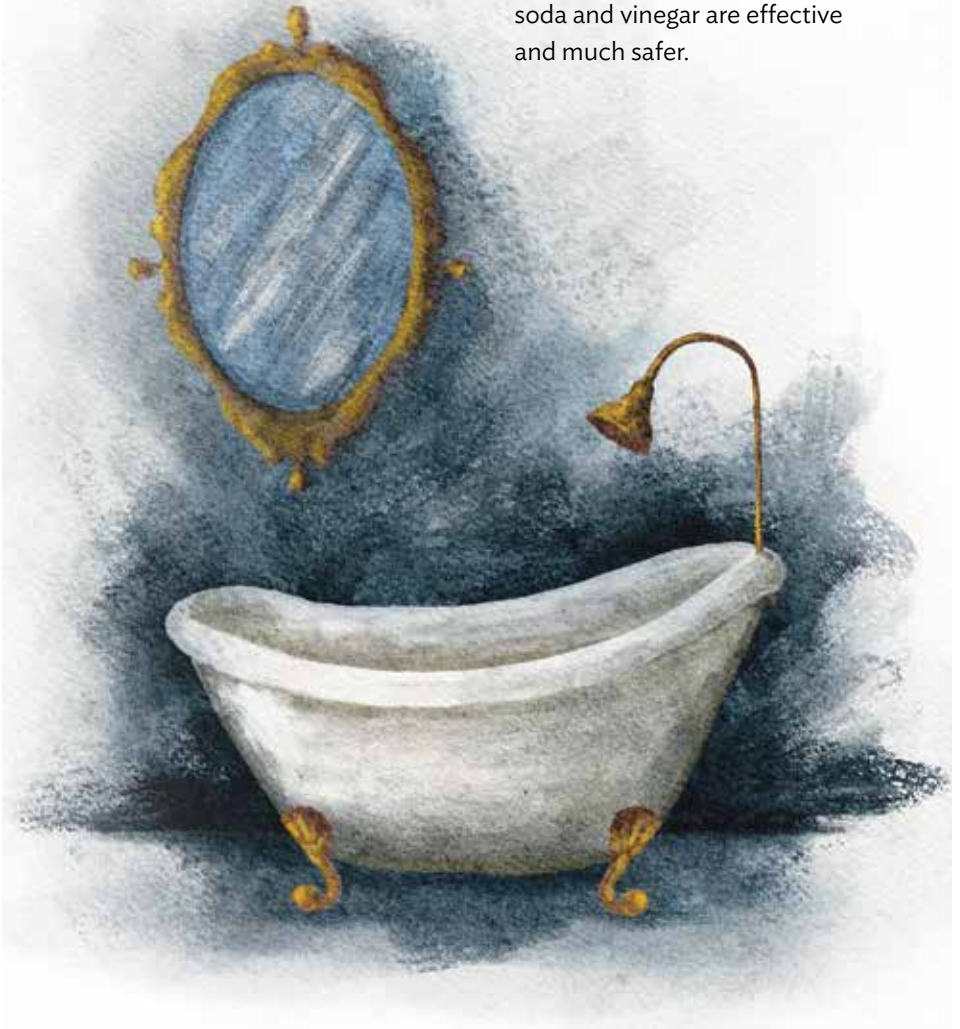
## +2K GALLON/YEAR

Washing the dishes in the sink with the water running uses an average of [20 gallons of water](#). Washing them in a full sink basin takes it down to 10 gallons.

# BATHROOMS

## **CLEANSERS/CLEANERS:**

Harsh chemicals used to clean bathrooms include bleach, ammonia, and lye. These get washed down the drain and enter the sewer system. Alternative products like baking soda and vinegar are effective and much safer.



**TOILET:** Nothing should go into your toilet except for human waste and toilet paper. “Flushable” wipes keep plumbers in business to the tune of several hundred dollars per visit. Do not believe product labels; wipes should not be flushed.

Personal hygiene products, cigarettes, diapers, makeup wipes, condoms, and bandages are some other items that should never be flushed. You’re only inviting the plumber to visit and making wastewater treatment more difficult when you flush these things.

**PILLS:** Never put pills down any drain or flush into your toilet. Treatment plants cannot filter them out completely and they pass into our streams, river, and Lake Erie.

There are many safe and discreet methods of disposal for old prescriptions and pills. NEORS D collects unwanted, used, or expired meds at its community collection events, and you can find safe drop-off locations in your community. Learn more at [neorsd.org/pitchthosepills](https://neorsd.org/pitchthosepills)

**NEEDLES/SHARPS:** Never put syringes, lancets, scalpels, or broken glass down the toilet or drain, and for your own safety don’t dispose of these items loosely into your trash. If you use needles regularly, get a sharps container, or make one from an empty laundry-detergent container.

**MERCURY THERMOMETERS:** If you have an old thermometer with mercury inside, do not dispose of it in the trash. NEORS D accepts mercury thermometers at our Environmental & Maintenance Services weekdays 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. There, your mercury thermometer can be swapped for a free digital thermometer (while supplies last, one per household).

For other items containing mercury, email [mercuryprogram@neorsd.org](mailto:mercuryprogram@neorsd.org) or call (216) 641-6000.

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**TIP:** Mercury emits dangerous odorless vapors. In case of a mercury spill, call Ohio EPA’s hotline at 1-800-282-9378.



## KITCHENS

**GREASE/OIL:** Never pour grease down your sink drain. It can clog pipes and result in a costly plumber's visit. Pour liquid fats into a can or jar or wait until the grease cools and use a spatula to scrape it into the trash.

**SCRAPS/TRIMMINGS:** Do not put fatty items like meat fat down your drain. Like other forms of grease, it can clog your pipes.

**DISHWASHER:** Scrape your plates before loading the dishwasher. This helps prevent sewer-line backups.

**CLEANSERS/CLEANER:** Harsh cleansers include bleach, ammonia, and caustic oven cleaner. White vinegar and baking soda are safe, effective alternatives to many harsh cleansers. For proper disposal of hazardous materials, contact your city.

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**TIP:** Many kitchen detergents contain phosphates, which are harmful to Lake Erie. Look for low- or no-phosphate detergents.



## YARD, GARAGE, AND OUTDOORS

**PET WASTE:** Doggy doo is not fertilizer. It contains bacteria that can pollute the groundwater. Always pick up after your pet and dispose of poop bags properly.

**PESTICIDES:** Take any unused or leftover chemicals to your local hazardous-waste collection site.

**POOLS:** Chlorine and bromine are harmful chemicals that can burn the skin. Use limited amounts and take any unwanted or leftover products to your local hazardous-waste collection site.

**CAR WASHING:** Runoff from washing a car on your driveway pollutes storm drains. (At a car wash facility, wastewater safely flows to a treatment plant.) If you do wash your car at home, do it on the grass where the soil can absorb and filter the soapy runoff.

**TANKS (PROPANE, HELIUM, OXYGEN):** Never place these in curbside recycling. Some tank manufacturers have recycling and/or disposal services for their products. Search “tanks” at [neorsd.org/cuyahogarecycles](http://neorsd.org/cuyahogarecycles)



# CLOSETS AND BASEMENTS



**CFL LIGHT BULBS:** Compact fluorescent lights (“CFLs”) contain mercury, which can release odorless, harmful vapors. If not recycled, they will leach from the landfill into the land, streams, and other waterways. Home Depot offers free, in-store CFL recycling.

**FLUORESCENT BULBS:** These bulbs also contain mercury and should not be placed in the trash. They are accepted at local hazardous-waste collection sites.

**GLUE:** Do not dispose of glue or containers with glue in the trash. It can break down in landfills and leach into the ground and waterways. Glues are accepted at hazardous-waste collection sites.

**LIGHTER FLUID:** Do not pour lighter fluid down any sink, drain, toilet or sewer. If there is a spill, use kitty litter to create a more solid mass that you can scrape up and put in the trash.

**LAUNDRY DETERGENT:** Many detergents contain phosphates, which contribute to pollution in Lake Erie. Look for detergents with low or no phosphates.

**COMPUTERS:** The Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District recycles computers during select months. They also have a list of solid waste district phone numbers for surrounding counties. Visit [neorsd.org/cuyahogarecycles](https://neorsd.org/cuyahogarecycles)

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**TIP:** Some major electronics chains have comprehensive, free electronics-recycling programs for proper disposal of items like computers and tablets, televisions, cell phones, video game systems, and more.

# SAFER CLEANING: NATURAL PRODUCTS AND ALTERNATIVES



**CLEANING:** Baking soda and vinegar, together or separately, make powerful cleaners for the kitchen and bath. Mix together for a foaming effect, or use vinegar to cut grease and mildew and baking soda paste to clean stubborn surfaces like pots and pans, stovetops, and inside the oven. Baking soda or borax also work well as whiteners.

**RECYCLING:** Recyclables (including phone books) can be taken to your local solid waste district.

**CARPET CLEANER:** Mix ¼ cup of vegetable oil-based liquid soap with 3 Tbsp. (or more) of water. Whip ingredients in a bowl with an egg beater. Rub foam into problem areas of the rug and rinse well with plain water.

**POOL:** Cleaning and/or sanitizing your pool with an ionizer can reduce the amount of chlorine and bromine you need.

## **ORGANIC LAWN AND GARDEN**

**CARE:** Natural alternatives to pesticides can repel bugs while keeping plants, humans, and animals safe. Research “organic lawn care” to learn more.

**UPHOLSTERY CLEANER:** Sprinkle baking soda or cornstarch on dry rugs and then vacuum. Try club soda or soap-based rug shampoo.

**FURNITURE POLISH:** Rub toothpaste (not gel) on wood furniture with a cloth to remove water marks. To polish, mix two parts olive oil to one part lemon juice. Rub mixture in and let it stand for several hours, then polish with a soft, dry cloth.

**COMPOSTING:** Composting creates useful mulch that you can use to make your yard or garden healthier.

**COMPOST:** Egg shells, tea bags, fruits and vegetables, hair/fur, hay or straw, house plants, coffee and coffee filters, leaves, cotton rags, nutshells, dryer lint, sawdust, fireplace ashes, grass clippings, wool rags, yard trimmings.

**DON'T COMPOST:** Coal or charcoal ash, black walnut tree leaves or twigs, dairy products, meat or fish bones or scrap, diseased or insect-ridden plants, fats, lard, grease or oils, pet waste, yard clippings from a yard that has been chemically treated.

# HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION

By federal law, empty household hazardous waste containers (with 3% or less of material remaining) can be disposed in the regular trash. Empty containers can also be disposed in your community's household hazardous waste collection. Collections vary from city to city, and most cities will only accept these items from local residents.

In Cuyahoga County, the Solid Waste District offers a county-wide Household Hazardous Waste Disposal Program to help residents dispose of dangerous or potentially harmful or hazardous materials, including oil-based paint, pesticides, solvents, aerosols, lawn and garden products, automotive fluids, pool chemicals, and household cleaners.

**Note:** Items like batteries, fluorescent bulbs, and latex paint are not accepted as part of this program. If you are unsure what to do with a particular item or type of hazardous waste, the Solid Waste District has a comprehensive website that answers many of these questions.

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**LEARN MORE** about Cuyahoga County's Household Hazardous Waste Disposal Program: [cuyahogarecycles.org/hazardous\\_waste](https://cuyahogarecycles.org/hazardous_waste)

Also:

**Lake County Solid Waste Division**

(440) 350-2644

**Lorain County Solid Waste Management District**

(440) 329-5440

**Summit County ReWorks**

(330) 374-0383