



UNIVERSITY OF
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IFAS EXTENSION

Making Simple Repairs: Clogged Drains¹

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Clogged drains can create a problem. However, a few simple precautions will help you to keep the drains open and in good working condition.

- After washing your head, clean the hair out of the drain.
- Never pour grease or greasy fluids down a drain. Grease hardens and will clog a drain. Pour used grease into a can to cool before putting it into a plastic bag. Put the bag in the garbage. Clean the greasy pan with hot water and detergents.
- Keep the drain strainer in your kitchen sink to catch small bits of food. Clean the strainer after each use.

Supplies Needed:

- Simple suction plunger

How To Fix a Clogged Sink

- In a single bowl sink, plug the overflow opening with a washcloth or rag. In a double bowl sink, plug the other drain. Keep these plugs in place.

- Place the plunger over the mouth of the drain. Press plunger down smoothly. Then, jerk the plunger up sharply.
- Repeat 20-30 times.
- If this removes the clog, rinse the drain with hot soapy water.
- If this does not unplug the sink, repeat.

If the drain is still stopped-up, check to see if the trap has a cleanout plug. (The trap is the U shaped part of the pipe under your sink.)

- If there is a cleanout plug, place a pan or bucket under the trap.
- Unscrew the cleanout plug with an adjustable wrench.
- Most clogs are in the trap. Use your finger, a pencil, or wire to clean the clog from the trap.

If this cleans the clog, replace the cleanout plug. Screw it together, then run hot, soapy water through the drain.

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- If this effort does not remove the clog or the trap does not have a clean out plug, notify your landlord or call a plumber.

How to Fix a Clogged Bathtub Drain

Supplies Needed:

- Screwdriver
- Plunger

The basic bathtub

- Cover the overflow drain with a wet washcloth or rag.
- Remove the stopper or closure from the bathtub drain.
- Fill the tub to a depth of about 2 inches.
- Place the plunger over the drain.
- Holding the cloth over the overflow drain, push the plunger down. Jerk it back up. Repeat this 20-30 times.

Bathtubs with lever closures

Bathtubs with lever closures:

- Some tubs have a lever on the overflow drain, which raises the cover of the bathtub drain.
- For these tubs, lift the drain cover out of the tub. Clean the extension of the cover.
- Unscrew the two screws holding the overflow cover. Place the two screws in a container away from the tub to avoid losing them.
- Remove the overflow cover. It has a rod and coil attached. Clean the coils attached to the cover. These coils collect hair, soap scum, and body oils.
- Run water through the drain. Use the plunger if needed.
- Put the coil and rod back in the overflow and refasten the cover with the screws.

- Put the bathtub drain cover back in the tub.

Chemical Drain Cleaners

Chemical drain cleaner facts

Chemical drain cleaners are:

- Highly advertised and widely used.
- Helpful only for sluggish drains.
- Toxic and should be stored and handled with extreme care.
- Bad for septic tanks.
- Caustic and could burn you or damage pipes or fixture finishes.

How to use a chemical drain cleaner

- Open windows and doors.
- Wear rubber gloves to prevent burning your hands.
- Read labels carefully and follow the instructions!
- DO NOT mix chemicals—if you use one brand that did not work, DO NOT use another brand or type on top of it—it may produce DEADLY fumes!
- DO NOT look or hold your head over the drain.
- DO NOT use plunger.