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What to do when your toilet is blocked

Plunging

Plungers can help deal with the majority of clogged toilets so it's worth beginning here first.

Close the flapper

If you have flushed once already and nothing's happening, do not flush a second time, as you risk the toilet over-flowing. The first thing you need to do is lift the lid of your toilet tank and close the toilet flapper with your hand. Don't worry - the water in the tank is perfectly clean. Look out for a circular drain stopper attached to a chain. This is the flapper. Closing it will prevent more water entering the toilet bowl.

Protect the area

Place newspaper or paper towels around the toilet to catch any splashes or drips. It's also a good idea to open a window or switch on the extractor fan to help with expelling any unwanted odours that may emerge.

Protect yourself

Wear rubber gloves to protect yourself from germs. You may need to invest in a pair of gloves that go right up to the elbows. Things may get messy, so wearing old clothing is also a good idea. Have a bucket on standby so you can dispose of any blockages that you may need to pull up rather than push down.

If there's a clear obstruction (for example, if your child has dropped a toy into the toilet) then you should be able to retrieve this with your rubber gloved hands.

Tools

If you are unable to clear the blockage by hand, then using a plunger is the next step. It's useful to have a plunger as part of your domestic household items. There are a variety of plungers on the market – from basic standard ones to high-quality, heavy-duty ones. Choose a plunger with a fold-out rubber flange which creates a secure seal. If you don't have one of these then securing an old rag around the plunger will help. You help soften the plunger and make it pliable, you can run it under hot water first.

Method

The plunger needs to completely cover the hole and should be entirely submerged to be effective. You can always add water from the sink to the toilet if you have to. Slowly push and pull the plunger over the hole pulling up sharply to dislodge the blockage or to loosen it. Increase the plunging action more vigorously and you will notice the water begin to drain. Be prepared to allow 15 minutes or more for the blockage to subside.

Check the drainage

It may be that your activity drains the bowl but the blockage remains. Flush the toilet to check the drainage. If the blockage remains then leave the plunger in and refill the bowl with water to its usual level, then begin plunging again. It's possible you need to persist with this activity until you're confident the blockage has subsided.

Other ways to unclog a toilet

Plunging is the best way to unblock a toilet, but if it remains you can use a combination of half a gallon of hot water with baking soda and vinegar as an alternative to a commercial drain cleaner. It's an environmentally-friendly alternative to a chemical drain cleaner.

The water must be hot **but not boiling** otherwise it can crack the porcelain:

Step 1: Pour a cup of baking soda and two cups of vinegar into your toilet. The reaction between the two substances will create a fizzing that will help dissolve soft blockages.

Step 2: Pour water from waist height directly into the bowl – this will create enough force to push a blockage down. Let the drain cleaner stand overnight to work.

Step 3: The following day, flush your toilet. If it is still blocked on the second flush then it may be you have a hard obstruction. If this is the case, you can try using a wire coat hanger to recover it. Alternatively, you could purchase a flexible cleaning tool (also known as a plumbing snake).

Step 4: The aim of a plumbing snake is to push it into the waste pipe until you meet the obstruction, at which point you should aim to twist the snake through the obstruction to break it up into smaller pieces. If then the water drains, flush the toilet to see whether it continues to drain as it should. The snake has a hook at the end for the purposes of retrieving accidentally flushed objects, like children's toys.

If you are still experiencing problems, then do not hesitate to give us a call.