



Your Health Department Working to Protect Your Groundwater



Anthony Deglman can't imagine that the ponds and streams he loves so much could become polluted and dangerous because household sewage treatment systems aren't operated properly. "Camping and fishing with my Grandpa is so much fun. I'd sure rather have clean water cause it's better for the fish," says Anthony, pictured here with his Grandpa Rich.



"Keeping our well free of harmful contaminants is important for both my family's health and the environment. Our water is great for both cooking and drinking and we want to keep it that way," says resident Ginger Reed. Her grandson, Aiden, is pictured above.

Did you know that **wastewater treatment is a relatively recent practice?** Just a little over 150 years ago, epidemics of cholera, typhoid, dysentery and other waterborne diseases killed thousands annually because no one knew that sewage contaminated water and spread disease.

Currently, in Fairfield County, there are over 17,500 individual household sewage treatment systems – and that number is steadily growing. Although homeowners are responsible for maintaining the safety of their own systems, if those systems don't work properly, the polluted water that results affects each and every one of us.

Your health department is responsible for ensuring the health and safety of all household sewage systems so that all of us can enjoy clean and safe water. Chances are good that you or someone you know in our county has one of these systems. If maintained properly, these household sewage systems are safe for handling all types of household waste.

To prevent pollution problems, Fairfield Department of Health staff work to educate homeowners about their household sewage treatment systems and how they work. With this knowledge, everyone can work together to keep our water safe and healthy.

For those homeowners who want to know more about how to maintain a household sewage system, the Fairfield Department of Health offers hands-on workshops, web-based information and links, and printed "how to" materials which can be very helpful and even save money for many homeowners.

In addition to homeowner education, Fairfield Department of Health environmental staff periodically inspects residential septic systems and assists homeowners with correcting any sewage treatment problems that may be present. Inspections may also occur if there is a complaint about a property or a body of water.



"We had standing water in our back yard. I had no idea what to do. We called the health department, and they came out right away. Steve has worked with us to solve our problem. We know he is here to help us – In fact, he's

been our advocate to get answers and get what we need. I recommend that anyone having household sewage issues call the health department right away."

Monica Hatfield Price, homeowner, pictured here with Registered Sanitarian Steve Deeter

How can homeowners find out more about their household sewage system?

Attend an upcoming workshop: The Fairfield Department of Health is pleased to offer "What you can't see CAN hurt you – Three Steps to Septic System Health" for those 17,500 – plus homeowners in our county with household sewage systems. The one and one half hour workshop, lead by a Registered Sanitarian, gives homeowners the opportunity to learn hands-on skills for maintaining and troubleshooting their septic systems. Covered are topics including:

1. routine maintenance and safety for all kinds of septic systems;
2. when to call in a professional; and
3. tips for protecting the groundwater environment surrounding their homes.

If your organization or local government would like to host one of these workshops, please contact the Fairfield Department of Health, 740-653-4489 ext. 168 for more information.

TOP FOUR THINGS YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM

1. **Regularly maintain and inspect your system,** and have your tank pumped as necessary. Keep a detailed record of repairs, pumpings, and other maintenance. Your health department offers a free record-keeping folder with handy information. You can obtain one by calling 740-653-4489 and asking for extension 168
2. **Use water efficiently in your home.** Water conservation is very important for septic systems because too much water and waste can affect the quality of the ability of the system to naturally remove toxins, bacteria, viruses and pollutants from the wastewater.
 - a. Repair any leaking faucets or running toilets;
 - b. Use washing machines and dishwashers only when full;
 - c. Avoid taking long showers, and install low-flush toilets if possible; and
 - d. Try not to use a lot of water at one time. For example, space out laundry over several days if at all possible
3. **Don't dispose of household hazardous wastes or medications** in sinks or toilets. As a rule, don't put anything into your septic system that could just as easily be put in the trash. This includes coffee grounds, disposable diapers, kitty litters, and paper towels. Also, don't flush liquids like paints, gasoline or pesticides. These items can destroy the biological digestion taking place in your system.
4. **Care for your drainfield properly,** if you have one. Don't dig in it or build anything over it. Don't allow anyone to drive or park over it.



"This is a beautiful place to live. I love being outside, enjoying all the wildlife around me. Protecting this land and the water for our children and grandchildren is really important for all of us.

I appreciate having health department experts available to help me understand how to take care of my household sewage system. This routine system maintenance is easier than I thought it would be, and will probably save me money in future repairs. And, I feel like I'm doing something to protect my own health."

Rushcreek Township resident Pete Peterson

What if your sewage system isn't working properly?

If your household sewage treatment system isn't operating properly, it can affect the health of your family and even the health of your community. This is why the Fairfield Department of Health is so concerned about maintaining and protecting your water quality.

If you have an aerobic system, and you notice that something is wrong with your motor, call your regular service contractor for assistance – don't wait for a routine maintenance check. As a homeowner, it is your responsibility to maintain your household sewage treatment system to ensure that it is in proper working order. If your system is not working properly, you need to fix it immediately.

If you're not sure what might be wrong with the system, you can call the Fairfield Department of Health and request an inspection of your system. Call the environmental phone number, 740-653-4489 extension 119 or 120 Monday through Friday from 8 am to 4 pm, and an environmental technician will discuss any potential problem with you.

If you need an inspection at this time, the technician will check your system by unplugging the motor, cleaning the aspirator shaft, use appropriate tools to evaluate the system, add chlorine tabs if needed, switch the fields in the diversion device, and determine if additional water sources are draining onto leach fields (roof drains, sump pumps, etc.) before there are additional problems.

Your help is needed to prevent pollution to the environment!



Please remember that it is the goal of the Fairfield Department of Health to provide information to educate homeowners about household sewage treatment systems and how they work. With this knowledge, we can work together to prevent further pollution of our environment.

Who do I contact with questions?

Program Coordinator: Steve Deeter, RS
(740) 653-4489 ext. 168