

How to Prevent Clogs in Your Drains

The best way to prevent slow or clogged drains is to be careful about what you put into them. Cooking grease, coffee grounds, hair, and soap scum are four of a drain's biggest enemies. Do whatever you can to avoid introducing any of these items into a drain. Here's how:

- Save cooking grease in an old coffee can or cardboard milk container. Then dispose of it in the trash.
- Throw coffee grounds away in the garbage or add them to your mulch pile.
- Use a screen or drain-grate to cover the drain's opening and minimize problems with hair and soap scum. Stop by your local plumbing-supply store to study the choices appropriate for your particular fixture. Take along a picture of the drain system to better explain your needs. Most filters and screens can be simply laid in place.

Regular cleaning has its merits. To keep drains in your home running freely — and absent of odor — try these methods:

- **Run hot water through the sink after each use.** Hot water keeps oils in food products running down the drain, rather than building up on the interior surface of pipes, which can make drains sluggish and lead to clogs.
- **Throw a handful of baking soda into the drain and follow it with hot water.** Baking soda is a terrific cleaning agent, and it's also great for absorbing foul odors.
- **Pour 1 cup of vinegar down the drain and let it sit for 30 minutes; then chase it down with very hot water.** Vinegar is a wonder cleaner. It contains acetic acid, which acts as an excellent organic solvent in removing organic buildup of crud in pipes.

If clogging is a regular problem at your place, try this one out for size. It works on drains in sinks, showers, and tubs. You need 1/2 cup each of baking soda, salt, and vinegar and a couple quarts of boiling water. Just before going to bed (to allow the solution to sit overnight, giving it more cleaning horsepower), do the following:

1. **Pour the salt and the baking soda into the drain.**
2. **Add the vinegar and let the concoction foam for about a minute.**
3. **Chase with at least 2 quarts of boiling water.**

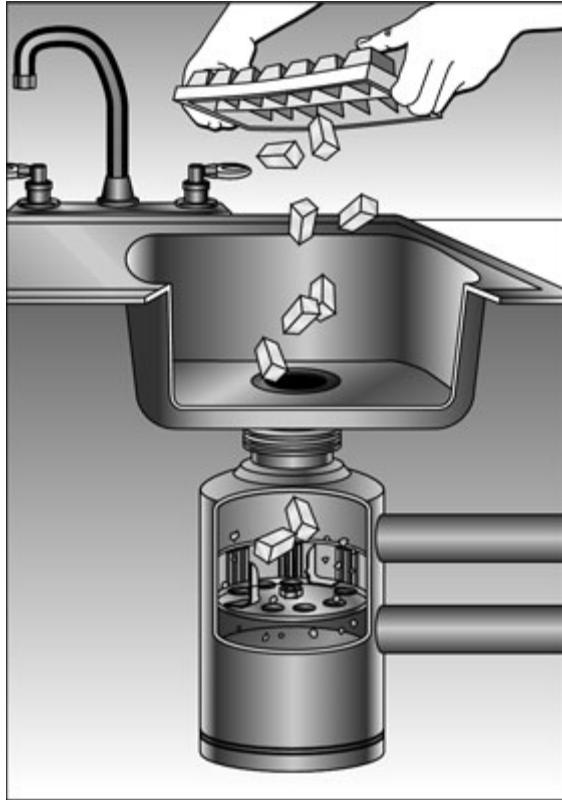
For sinks with garbage disposals, you can also try this trick:

1. **Fill an ice-cube tray half-full with vinegar and top it off with clear water.**

Vinegar alone won't freeze well. Be sure to mark the tray clearly — you wouldn't want an unsuspecting family member to end up with a mouthful of vinegar.

2. **Turn the disposal on and then throw in the cubes.**

Vinegar is a mild acid that cleans the disposal and the drain while the ice literally chills and scrapes grease off its walls.



If you don't like the smell of vinegar, you can chase the cubes with one sliced lemon. Your disposal and your kitchen will smell great!