

## Drain Maintenance Items for Apartments

In apartment buildings, one of the biggest causes of damage (and expense) is where supply water to basins, sinks and washing machines etc. have leaks or blocked waste drains that overflow, resulting in a flood which results in saturated carpets in your apartment and often, water damage to ceiling, walls and carpets of lower level apartments. These are largely preventable by inspection of plumbing items on a regular basis and acting on irregularities found.

In this article, we will look at some of the routine maintenance tasks of the accessible plumbing objects found in an apartment that resident/owners/property managers should be doing; if a partial blockage in drains is noticed, there are a number of options to look at before going to the expense of calling a plumber.

Easy and regular inspection/maintenance can avoid future trouble and expense if your drain floods a lower apartment.

### INSPECTION AND MAINTENANCE

Open all cupboard doors where there is plumbing and check that floors and shelves under the areas are dry; if not, look for the source of water. Generally, this will be found anywhere around where there are pipes with joins to other pipes or taps.

- Laundry:
  - check that the washing machine waste pipe is inserted into its appropriate pipe and is secured so it cannot fall out
- Shower:
  - Check sealant and grouting on shower floor and or wall tiles, look for gaps where water can penetrate potentially rotting wall and floor framing where water volumes penetrating is small.
- Hot Water cupboard: Ensure
  - there is no water in the polyurethane tray under the hot water cylinder.
  - there area around the hot water cylinder is clear
  - the polyurethane tray is clear anything that will prevent water draining away to the waste drain in it.
- Shower:
  - Floor waste: If there is a removable floor trap, open and clean monthly; otherwise remove caught hair etc. from the drain. Then for
- All Drains
  - Mix up and leave one of the **three different soda mixtures** (see last page) in the laundry, kitchen & bathroom drains to soak overnight, follow up with a flush of hot water in the morning. This will not only prevent the drains from blocking but deodorise them as well.

***Anywhere there is water found where it should not be; act immediately to stop the flow, contain it (a bucket) and then initiate repair.*** Residents of rental apartments should call their property manager for immediate repair action.

## **WHAT CAUSES THE SHOWER DRAIN TO BECOME CLOGGED?**

A clogged shower drain is usually caused by a lump of knotted hair, dirt, grease and/or soap. The hair is often wrapped around parts of the drain and therefore can be difficult to shift.

The problem occurs much more frequently in homes where one or more of the shower users has long hair, as short hair is much less likely to get caught in the drain system.

Commercial chemicals are not recommended to be used as they can potentially cause damage to drainage pipes, especially if used repeatedly. Regular preventative cleaning is easy.

### **1. Pour Boiling Water Down the Drain.**

This can sometimes break down the soap or grease that is holding the clog together and clear the blockage. Used on its own, this method may not work, however, especially if you are dealing with a serious blockage that contains a lot of matted hair and has built up over time

### **2. Try Using a Plunger.**

The nature of the blockage, where the clog is in the drain, and the design of your drain will determine how successful plunging will be – if the clog is deep and made of hair, for instance, you might struggle to get enough suction for plunging to be effective.

You can try adding petroleum jelly to the edge of the suction pad to get a better seal and also adding water to the shower so that the end of the plunger is submerged, if it isn't already.

### **3. Baking Soda and Vinegar (the Natural Alternative to Chemicals!)**

This is a more natural solution than using cleaning chemicals. Pour a cup of baking soda down the drain, wait for a few minutes, then pour a cup of vinegar down too.

Wait for a couple of hours to see if the hair clog gets dissolved, then clean out the drain by pouring boiling water down it.

Although this method is ecologically preferable and won't cause damage to plastic pipes, you may still end up having to resort to chemicals,

### **4. Take the Drain Cover off and Pull Out the Clog by Hand.**

This method has a fairly good chance of success, but it involves using your hands, so I would advise wearing rubber gloves.

First you need to remove the drain cover. Sometimes there is a screw in the middle that you have to take out. Other times you can pry the drain cover off using a screwdriver.

Look inside the drain and locate the clog. Use a flashlight, if necessary. If the clog is within reach, pull it out with your fingers.

### **5. Call a Plumber.**

If you don't want to start taking your drain apart and are uneasy about using chemicals, or they don't work, then you will have to call out a professional plumber.

## DRAIN MAINTENANCE

Use a mixture of baking soda and vinegar about once a week on your drain. The mixture will not only break up any greasy buildup in your pipes, but it will also help keep the room smelling nice and fresh. By using household products like baking soda in your drain, you will not only have a cleaner smelling kitchen, but you also won't have the unexpected expense (and stress) of having to call a plumber.

There are three different soda mixtures that are worth trying when it comes to de-clog a drain.

### **Baking Soda + Vinegar**

Everyone knows that baking soda mixed with vinegar makes great volcanoes, but what many people don't know is that it also makes great clog remover. Sprinkle one part of baking soda down your drain and follow up with one part of white vinegar. Let this bubble in your drain overnight and flush it out with hot water in the morning.

### **Baking Soda + Salt**

Mix one part of baking soda with one-part salt and four parts of boiling water. Dump this mixture down the drain and let it sit overnight. Flush your drain with hot water in the morning.

### **Washing Soda/Sal Soda/Soda Crystals**

Whatever you wish to call it, sodium carbonate can be found in the detergent aisle of your local grocery store. Combine this with an equal part of hot water and let the mixture sit in your drain. Again, this is an overnight activity that you'll want to follow up with a flush of hot water in the morning.