

How to Maintain Your Garbage Disposal

A garbage disposal, also known as a waste disposal unit, is a device underneath a sink that shreds food waste so that it can pass through the plumbing. A garbage disposal is a great way to keep the smells of old garbage out of your garbage cans and kitchen.

Best Practices:

Keep anything too hard out of the disposal. The shredder will dull and become less efficient. Small, hard objects can also get stuck and jam the rotating parts. Each garbage disposal has its own capacity for hard objects. The more expensive models of the same brand tend to have a higher hardness capacity. The instruction manual usually specifies a list of objects to avoid. You can also gain experience with your own garbage disposal. Strong vegetable fibers can jam some garbage disposals as well. If something may be harder than what the disposal handles, just put it in your trash can or think about setting up a worm composting bin.

- Some items to avoid are:
 - Hard shells from shrimp, crabs or other shellfish
 - Un-popped popcorn kernels
 - Hard bones
 - Celery



Do not put fibrous or starchy items in the disposal. Both can cause stubborn drain blockages (fibers get tangled and starches get thick). The following items should be put in the disposal in minimal increments, preferably cut into small pieces, or not at all and are all easily composted:



- Banana peels
- Celery
- Potato peelings
- Corn husk or corn cobs
- Artichokes
- Eggshells or onion shells (unless you are especially careful to completely remove the thin membranes of each, which can wrap around the shredder ring)
 - Coffee grounds (in quantity) or coffee filters
 - Fruit pits and hard seeds from things like avocados or peaches

Avoid placing trash or hard items down the disposal. Common sense will go a long way, but here are some examples of items to avoid:

- Twist ties, pull tabs, rubber bands
- Glass, screws and nails
- Utensils
- Cigarette butts or bottle caps, paper, plastic or other trash
- Fabric, string, rags or sponges
- Plant or flower clippings
- Children's toys
- Hair
- Grease

Cut large items into smaller pieces. If they are too large, like the skins of melons, cut them into smaller pieces and put them one at a time into the disposal instead of trying to shove a large amount in at once.

If you find yourself with a lot of larger pieces to cut up, it may be best to place them in the compost or trash instead.



Run cold water while the disposal is on. Keep the disposal and water running for 30 to 60 seconds AFTER the waste matter has cleared your drain. The waste still has a distance to go. Cold water keeps the motor, bearings and shredder assembly from overheating. It also lets the waste go down easier because the water is pushing it down. Don't use hot water because it can melt fat and allow it to re-solidify as a blockage further down in the drain.

Clean your garbage disposal regularly.

- With the disposal off, clean the inner side of the rubber in the center of the sink that leads to the disposal. It gets very dirty and gives off an odor when it is not cleaned. Wipe this area with a paper towel.
- Throw some ice in your garbage disposal. While ice will not sharpen the shredders (as is commonly believed) it does knock off any debris that may build up on the sharp edges, which keeps them from grinding food properly. For better results, make special ice cubes from pure lemon juice, vinegar or alternate with cleanser (label them in your freezer!) Be sure to run cold water at the same time.
- Dispose of orange peels or any citrus rings to freshen the disposal and keep it smelling clean. Make sure to cut them into slices first as large pieces of citrus peels can jam a disposal. You can also use pieces of citrus fruit that may be too old to consume, as long as they are not too spoiled to smell nice. You can freeze these pieces first, if you wish.

If the disposal jams...

- Turn off the power and look underneath the sink. There is a place in the center of the motor shaft, on the bottom of the unit, where you can use an Allen wrench to manually turn the motor. Give the motor a few manual turns to get it unstuck and then remove the Allen wrench before you try to run the motor again. Also, press the reset button, circuit breaker on the bottom of unit, if applicable.
- Read the directions for your model before attempting a home repair. Most disposals have an electrical reset button and a manual hex key for unjamming. If the disposal stops working, its internal circuit breaker may have shut it off. Turn the switch off and try to pull out the hard object that may have jammed it. Then use the right-sized hex key to manually turn the rotor parts (usually directly under the unit in the center). If it turns, then push the reset button. It usually clicks in. Then, turn on the water and try the power again.

Alternatives to using your disposal...



- Composting is a great alternative to using your disposal. When done properly, it doesn't create odors – it creates rich fertilizer for your garden or potted plants.
- Garbage disposals are noisy, somewhat unreliable since you cannot always know what will go down and what will not. On the other hand, powerful and reliable garbage disposals are expensive. A great alternative is a trash can with a lid that seals in the smells. Keep it right next to the counter by your sink so the waste can go right into it from over the counter.

Freshening your disposal...

- There are commercial products that are designed to freshen your disposal. One product is a biodegradable bag filled with a cleaning powder that you drop into the disposal; it foams up as you run your garbage disposal with the water on.

Warnings

- Don't put any utensils, non-food materials or your hands in the disposal under any circumstances.
- Don't touch the power switch while your hands are wet. This can cause a shock.
- If you have a septic tank, you must adjust your tank pumping schedule for the use of a disposal.
- Keep in mind that although this method may appear to reduce your garbage, it only moves the garbage downstream to be dealt with at your local sewage treatment plant,

your septic system or (in a multi-family building) your neighbors below you. It also increases the amount of water you consume.

- There are strict regulations on garbage disposal installation and use in many countries.
- Some effluent disposal systems will not cope with the increased volume of water and organic waste resulting from the use of kitchen waste disposal units.

Information taken from the following website:

www.wikihow.com/Maintain-a-Garbage-Disposal