

12 Communities without a sewage disposal system

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Environmental Health Practitioner Manual: A resource manual for Environmental Health Practitioners working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

Page last updated: November 2010

Some communities may not have sewage systems with pipes, septic tanks/leach drains or lagoons. This may be because they are new communities or the people are staying in a place which is not used all the time.

The sewage and effluent has to be disposed of properly in some other way. If this does not happen the sewage and effluent may cause disease.

Wastewater from people washing themselves and their clothes and bedding, and from cooking must not be tipped onto the ground. This wastewater can contain disease-causing germs. The wastewater can lie in pools allowing germs to breed and causing bad smells. It attracts flies and mosquitoes, and can also be harmful to children and family pets who like to play in water.

The methods of sewage disposal outlined below can be used as temporary (short-term) solutions, but they will never be as good as a proper sewage system.

Combination of a grease trap and soakage pit

This pit can be used for disposing of cooking and washing wastewater in temporary camps and in new communities for a short period of time until proper disposal systems are installed. It cannot be used for toilet waste.

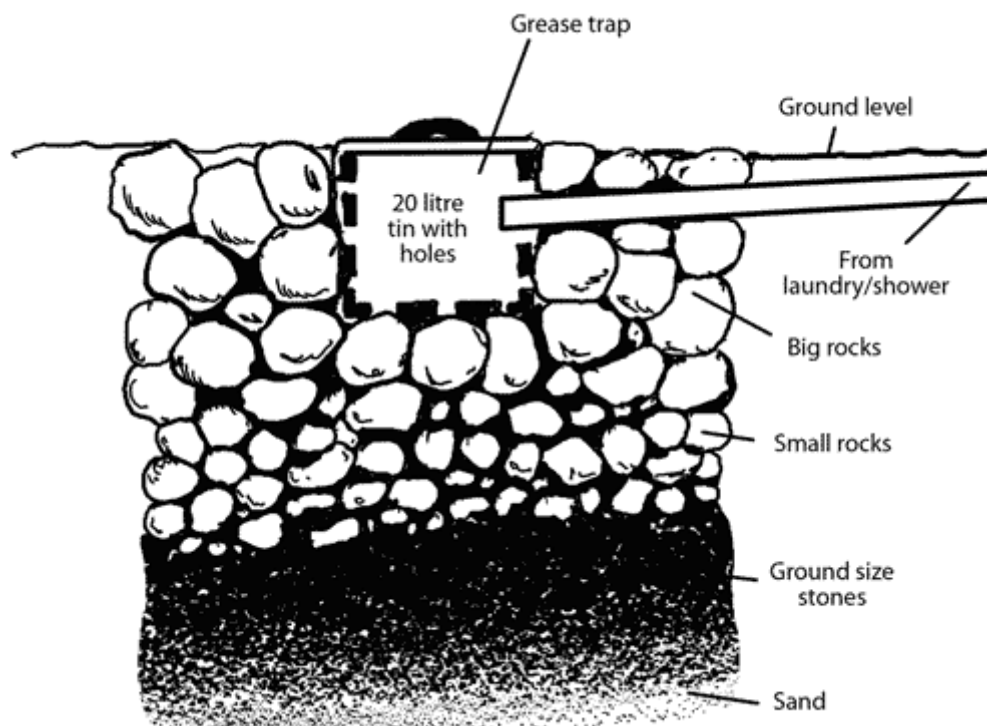


Fig. 2.44: Grease trap and soakage pit.

The **grease trap** collects any food scraps and solids and prevents any grease or fat from entering the **soakage pit**.

The grease trap is a 20 L (4 gallon) drum with a tight fitting removable lid. It has holes in the bottom and in the sides.

The grease trap is set into a large hole called the soakage pit. This is filled with stones and sand. The hole should be carefully packed with sand at the bottom and layered with stones of different sizes - small stones (gravel) at the bottom to large stones at the top.

Soakage pits should be about 1200 mm square and the same distance (1200 mm) deep. If one pit is not big enough more of the same size can be dug. These can be individual pits or connected by pipes.

It may be necessary to clean out the grease trap every day depending on how much use the pit is getting. The waste from the grease trap should be buried at the place where other rubbish (solid waste) is being buried.

Grease traps and soakage pits should be covered to keep out flies. Flywire can be used to cover the soakage pit around the grease trap.

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Pit toilets

Where there are temporary camps or where the community is newly established and there is not yet a water supply which will allow the use of flush toilets, the following types of pit toilets can be used:

- bore-hole latrines
- VIP latrines
- shallow trench latrines

Shallow trench latrines can be built where there are large numbers of people who are going to live in a place for a short time only. There is a latrine for each sex and each time a person goes to the toilet he/she should cover any faeces with soil.

When a trench is nearly full, it should be filled with soil.

Chemical toilets may be considered, but are rarely practical in these situations because of the need for supplies of chemical and pump-out equipment. Also, it is sometimes difficult transporting these toilets to remote places.