



# Basic Plumbing

## INTRODUCTION

- Fix simple plumbing problems as soon as they occur; letting them go will lead to more expensive work down the road
- Be aware of any plumbing codes in your city, county or municipality; be sure that any work you do is to code
- Codes may require a permit for major plumbing work in your home; always check with local authorities and obtain any necessary permits
- While doing any plumbing, always start by turning off the water supply



**Notes:** The methods described here are for the most common fittings used in most homes • If your situation is different, talk to a plumber before you start any complex job

## CLEARING CLOGS

### UNCLOGGING A DRAIN

- Always start by checking the pop-up stopper in the tub or sink; make sure that it is open and clear of all debris
- If the stopper is clear and open, then the drainpipe is probably clogged
- Try a chemical drain cleaner; let it sit for the recommended amount of time and flush it down with hot water (another home remedy option is baking soda and vinegar)
- If that does not work, then remove the strainer over the clogged drain
- Clean the strainer; in some cases, this may be the cause of the clog
- You can also try using a plunger to clear the drain

#### Using a plunger

• Block any overflow hole or other drains in adjacent sinks • If there is nothing in the tub or sink, then run 2-3 inches of water over the drain; this will help to force out the obstruction • Use a thick layer of petroleum jelly on the rim of the plunger; this helps to create a tighter seal • Push the plunger down several times with force • Stop and test to see if the water will drain; if not, keep plunging • When the drain is clear, run hot water down it for a couple of minutes to remove any remaining debris

#### Cleaning the sink trap

• Make sure you that have a bucket handy to catch any water waste • Look for a clean-out plug in the trap; it should be square or hexagonal and on the base of the bend • If there is a clean-out plug, then remove it and use a straightened wire coat hanger to clean out any debris • If there is no clean-out plug, then you will need to remove the trap by loosening the couplings that hold it in place; if you have chrome pipe fittings, pad any tools you use to help protect the finish • Hold the trap over the bucket and use a straightened wire coat hanger to clear out any debris • Wash the trap out with soap and hot water • Replace the trap; be aware that you may have to reseal the threads (use a joint compound or Teflon tape)

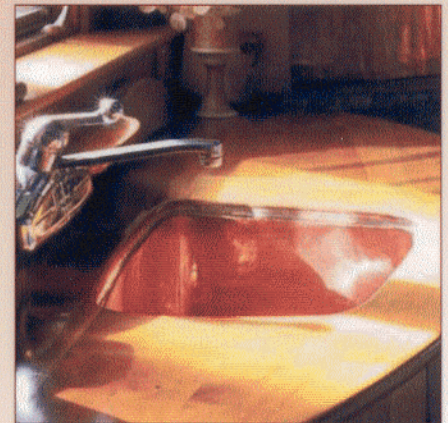
### USING A SEWER SNAKE

- If the trap is clear but the drain is still clogged, you will need to use a "sewer snake" (plumber's auger)
- Insert the snake into the drain and push until you hit the obstruction
- Try to hook the snake on the clog by twisting it clockwise
- Twist and push the clog back and forth until you break it up
- Remove the snake and flush the pipe thoroughly with cold water
- Reassemble the trap; be aware that you may have to reseal the threads
- Once it is back together, run the tap for a couple of minutes to make sure the clog is totally gone

### UNCLOGGING THE MAIN DRAIN

- If more than one sink, bathtub or toilet is clogged, then you will need to clean out the main drain
- To do so, find the clean-out plugs located on the large drainpipes (generally located on the vertical pipes in a basement or crawl space)
- Remove the fitting for the clean-out plug; be sure to have a bucket handy when opening up the drain
- Use a sewer snake to break up any clogs; make sure that you insert the snake in both directions of the pipe
- When you have cleared the pipe, replace the steel cap on the drain pipe

## PREVENTING CLOGS



### IN THE KITCHEN

- Do not pour grease down the kitchen sink; place the grease in a can and throw it in the garbage
- Do not put coffee grounds down the sink; throw them in the compost or the garbage
- Regularly run water down the drain to completely flush any food particles down the drain
- Once a week, you should also pour a kettle of boiling water down the drain to help keep it clear
- If using chemical cleaners, use those cleaners containing sodium hydroxide or sodium nitrate; they are more effective, safer, and gentler on pipes

### IN THE BATHROOM

- Clean the pop-up stoppers in sinks and tubs often; hair can collect there and cause clogs
- Never flush heavy-duty paper products down the toilet

### GENERAL TIPS

- Never dump chemicals (like paint or paint thinner) down a drain
- If you use a septic tank, then have it inspected every two to three years; some areas may require more frequent inspections (check with local authorities)
- Use a non-caustic drain cleaner every few months to help maintain a clog free drain