

12. Where does our water go?

Discussion topics and information

Sewage and Sewerage what's the difference?

Sewerage = the pipes and infrastructure that transport wastewater

Sewage = wastewater and associated organic material.

Where does the water from inside your house go?

Once used, water inside houses and buildings goes into the sewerage network. Water, detergents and organic material (food scraps, human waste) are transported via sewers to treatment plants. There are about 7,888 kilometres of sewer pipes in the Adelaide metropolitan area. Water makes up 99.9% of sewage. There are four treatment plants in Adelaide: Bolivar, Glenelg, Christies Beach and Port Adelaide. Treatment removes the majority of pollutants and bacteria before releasing the water out to sea.

In outer metropolitan and rural areas without sewerage, septic tanks collect wastewater instead. A few homes even have composting toilets and reed beds to treat wastewater.

What about water from outside the house?

Water used outside the house and rain falling on a property are disposed of by stormwater drains. This water leaves the property via downpipes, drainage channels or driveways and then runs down the road in gutters and into roadside drains. From the drains, stormwater is directed into the nearest waterway or into the sea. Stormwater is not treated before it reaches waterways!

How can stormwater cause environmental problems?

It is very important to note that stormwater networks directly link our homes to waterways whether we live near a stream or not. What is left lying on roads, driveways and other sealed surfaces may be washed into the network by rain. In urban areas, stormwater is the main source of pollution in waterways.

In rural areas, rainwater runoff travels across land surfaces into waterways or dams. It will transport loose soils and chemicals on its way.

Lesson ideas

- Complete the stormwater colouring activity included in this section.
- List different uses of water in and around the house; for each use does the water go into the sewerage or stormwater network?
- Watch what runs down the gutters after rain and write a list of what you see.
- Do a litter survey of all sealed surfaces in the school: car park, footpaths, courts etc. Find out where the litter goes when it rains (include leaves, lawn clippings, dog poo, oil etc).
- Visit a nearby creek or the beach and find where a stormwater drain enters. Can you see things that have washed in from the drain?
- What does the slogan "the drain is just for rain" mean? Turn it into a jingle, poster or brochure.
- Participate in OWN's "Life's a Drain" programme (Term 2), Contact OWN for details

Recommended resources

www.uwi.com.au united water information about wastewater treatment.

www.yvw.com.au/newed/juniors.html - Cloudia Raindrop explores the sewerage system!