

# Septic Tanks

Septic tanks are typically a two or three chamber system where sewage is retained to enable the settlement of solids, biological digestion and effluent discharge.

Effluent from a septic tank may be disposed of via a soak-away, provided that it does not present a pollution risk to ground or surface water. A percolation test will usually be required prior to tank installation (see section on drainage fields).

## Tank capacity

The size of the tank must be suitable for the number of people or households that intend to use it. Your tank installer should be able to advise and may use the following formula:

$$C = (180P + 2000)$$

Where

**C = Capacity of the tank in litres**

**P = The population served**

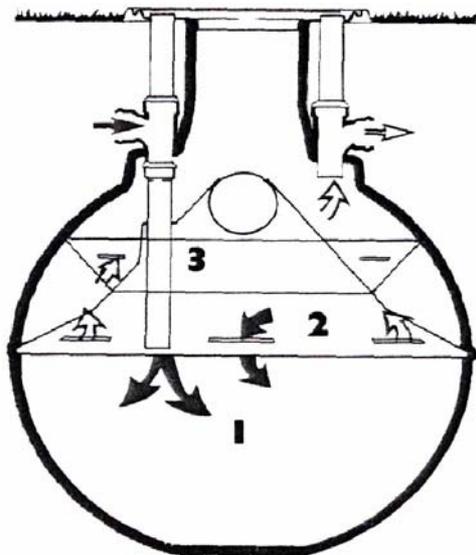
## Tank location

There are a few things to bear in mind when planning the location of your septic tank:

- Tanks and soak-aways should ideally be located at least 15 metres from any dwelling.
- Tanks and soak-aways should never be located near to a well or borehole.
- Environment Agency consent may be required for discharge from a septic tank.

## How it works

Sewage enters the chamber via the inlet 1 and there the solids settle. Settled effluent then passes up through the tank and into chamber 2. Here finer suspended matter is treated, with any sediment falling back down into tank 1 via some slots. Clarified effluent from chamber 2 passes into chamber 3 and is then discharged via the outlet into the drainage field.



It is important to find out at an early stage whether or not your ground conditions are suitable for the installation of a drainage field.

A simple percolation test will be conducted (your tank installer may be able to do this).

The area of your drainage field will also be determined by the number of people using the septic tank.

Generally a drainage field should not be sited closer than 10 metres to a ditch, drain or other watercourse. Soak-away pipes should be buried as shallow as possible (usually within 1 metre of the ground surface).

**For more information you can contact the Environment Agency on 0800 807060**

## Other Systems

### Cesspits

Cesspits are covered watertight tanks that receive and store sewage. No treatment of the sewage occurs in the tank, and it will require frequent emptying.

Cesspit facts:

- They should be located no closer than 15m from your house.
- The minimum capacity (from the Building Regulations) is 18 cubic metres or at least 45 days storage.
- They should not collect rainwater.
- They must remain impervious to the ingress of groundwater or surface water and leakage.

### **Biodiscs**

Biodiscs are tanks that contain a rotating biological filter to digest and settle sewage solids. They require a drainage field similar to septic tanks so consent will be required from the Environment Agency.

- Biodiscs may serve multiple properties and may be more appropriate than many septic tanks.
- A constant supply of electricity is required to turn the biological filter.
- Consent from the Environment Agency is required to discharge to a watercourse.

### **Caring for your System**

- Conserve water.
- Minimise antibacterial detergent use.
- The tank should ideally be desludged when it is half full of sludge.
- Approximately 1/6 of the sludge should be left in the tank to maintain septicity.

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