



Health Information: Greywater Reuse

This information sheet outlines information about greywater and greywater reuse from the perspective of health protection and within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health.

Key Facts about greywater reuse

- According to the Sewerage System Regulation:
 - Greywater is considered sewage.
 - Discharging sewage onto land, into a source of drinking water, surface water, or tidal waters is considered a health hazard.
 - In house greywater reuse systems do not fall under the Sewerage System Regulation and are not filed as a sewerage system.
 - All domestic sewage originating from a building must go into a public sewer or a sewerage system unless it is authorized under another enactment.
- The B.C. Building Code allows for the construction of non-potable water systems, and subsurface irrigation with non-potable water.

What is greywater?

As defined in the [Manual of Composting Toilet and Greywater Practice](#), greywater is waterborne waste from the preparation of food and drink, dishwashing, bathing, showering and general household cleaning and laundry. It does not include toilet, kitchen sink, or dishwasher waste.

How greywater reuse is regulated in B.C.

Technically under the Sewerage System Regulation, grey water is considered sewage, and discharging it onto land, into a source of drinking water, surface water, or tidal waters is considered a health hazard.

All domestic sewage originating from a building must go into a public sewer or a sewerage system unless it is authorized under the [B.C. Building Code](#). The [B.C. Building](#)

[Code](#) allows for the construction of non-potable water systems, and subsurface irrigation with non-potable water.

The [Health Canada Guidelines for Domestic Reclaimed Water for use in Toilet and Urinal Flushing](#) provides further guidance for grey water systems, and is referenced in the BC Building Code.

Local governments may also create bylaws which allow for the surface discharge of grey water if it meets the provisions of the B.C. Building Code for grey water disposal.

Considerations for grey water reuse

Greywater may be reused for low-risk purposes such as subsurface irrigation of lawns, ornamental gardens, or toilet flushing. Runoff of greywater from the property must be avoided.

All greywater diversion and greywater treatment systems have to be approved by the local authority and must be installed by a licensed plumber. Greywater treatment systems collect, store, treat (chemically and/or biologically) and may disinfect greywater to the standards specified by the local authority. Depending on the level of treatment, this enables the use of treated greywater for above ground irrigation, toilet flushing and cold water supply to washing machines. Treated greywater can be stored for longer than 24 hours, unlike untreated greywater.

Owners of grey water systems need to be aware of potential environmental impacts related to grey water system maintenance and household habits, with particular attention to chemicals used in the home (such as cleaning products and laundry detergents). For example:

- For laundry water, select garden-friendly detergents (biodegradable and low in phosphorus, boron, sodium, and chlorine). Some detergents may contain high levels of sodium, carbonates, boron and phosphates, which may have long-term effects on plants or soils.
- Avoid watering fruits or vegetables intended for raw consumption with greywater.
- Don't apply greywater in areas which are readily accessible to children, pets, or immunocompromised people.
- Don't use greywater when a household resident is sick (diarrhea, etc).
- Don't use greywater which contains cleaning products, hair dye, or other chemicals (paint, etc).