Onsite Wastewater System Guidelines for Patients Taking Antibiotics or Chemotherapy Drugs

Chemotherapy Treatment and/or Strong Antibiotics Can Impact an Onsite Wastewater (Septic) System

Proper maintenance, including regular inspections, can ensure your wastewater system remains healthy. Onsite wastewater systems depend one biologic processes to decompose solids and treat the wastewater. Certain medications/treatments can impact your system. Continue reading to learn more about actions you can take to keep your onsite wastewater system healthy if you or a family member are on high-strength chemotherapy drugs or long-term antibiotics.

Pump Your Tank

If you receive chemotherapy for cancer treatment, plan to have the tank pumped more frequently. If you need ongoing chemotherapy for an autoimmune condition such as rheumatoid arthritis, the amount of the medication you receive is lower than the amount used to kill cancer cells. However, it may be a good preventive measure to have the tank checked after the first several months.

Avoid Use of Harsh Chemicals

Disinfectants, such as large volumes of bleach and stong cleaning products such as quaternary ammonia, can impact the bacteria that are necessary for your wastewater system to function properly. When on chemotherapy treatment or long-term antibiotics, avoid using things like harsh cleaning products. Bacterial additives are not recommended for normal maintenance.

Learn more about wastewater systems and medications from Michigan State University Extension:
https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/can-medications-harm-my-septic-system.

Learn more about Vermont's wastewater and water supply program at:
https://dec.vermont.gov/water/ww-systems.

This fact sheet is not a replacement for professional advice. If you have questions, please contact the Department of Environmental Conservation Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division's Regional Office Program. Need to know your Regional Office? Go to this website http:// dec.vermont.gov/water/ww-systems#romap or call (802)-522-3257 for assistance.

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