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Don't Flush That!

Bananas, oranges, apples, and cherries—what do these four fruits have in common? They all have parts that you cannot eat. Bananas and oranges have peels, apples have seeds and stems, and cherries have pits. But what do you do with these parts after eating the fruit? Do you throw them in the trash, put them down the drain of your sink, or flush them down the toilet?

Many people might think that since all these parts come from food, they can just be flushed away. But in reality, flushing things like peels, seeds, pits, tissues, wipes, or trash can cause big problems in our wastewater system. The toilet is designed to handle human waste and toilet paper, which is quick to break down and doesn't clog pipes. However, items like wipes, tissues, food scraps, or trash do not break down easily and can cause blockages.

When inappropriate items are flushed, they can clog pipes and damage the equipment at wastewater treatment plants. These clogs can lead to sewage overflows, which sometimes release raw sewage into our rivers and lakes. This pollution harms wildlife, makes the water unsafe for swimming and fishing, and costs a lot of money to fix. For example, wipes labeled "flushable" often don't dissolve as promised, and they can get stuck in pipes or cause backups.

Wastewater treatment plants are very important because they clean our water before it is returned to natural sources like rivers and lakes. They remove harmful bacteria, chemicals, and waste so that the water is safe for animals, plants, and people. But if trash and non-flushable items clog the system, it can slow down or stop the treatment process. That's why only human waste and toilet paper should go down the toilet—because they are designed to break down safely in the system.

So, what should you do instead? Dispose of food parts like peels, pits, and seeds in the trash or compost bin. Use a trash can for tissues, wipes, and other trash. Remember, the toilet is not a trash can! Flushing inappropriate items can cause clogs, pollute our water, and make our environment less healthy.

In conclusion, we all need to be responsible about what we flush. Only flush human waste and toilet paper to keep our water clean and our wastewater systems working properly. By doing so, we help protect our environment, save money, and keep water safe for everyone. So next time you finish your fruit or wipe your hands, think about where those parts go—because the toilet isn't a place for trash!