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In the Toilet: What Really Happens After You Flush

Plunk. You stuffed your choo-choo train, baby unicorn, and cute plushies in the toilet out of curiosity. *What happens when you flush all those things?* Your mom isn't home anyway. What's the worst that could happen? You press the metal button and *-whoosh!-* they swirl down until the toilet gets stuck. The water overflows and damps your socks. *What should you put in the toilet and not?*

People use toilet paper every day around the world. But have you ever wondered what happens to it after you flush? Moreover, where does it go? A giant dump truck? A huge pit? Or maybe a tunnel full of waste? To think this through, imagine you flushed down your choo-choo train, baby unicorn, and cute plushies *again*, but this time, they are chopped into bits of dust, so they can't get stuck on the way.

Let's take a deeper look- when you flush, they actually go down to your home's drain-waste-vent system. This system has several pipes, each with different purposes. Some can carry waste and water, while others prevent sewer gases from coming back into your house.

Next, the waste flows to the main drain. The main drain meets with the other houses' drains and travels underground until it reaches the city's wastewater treatment plant. There, the plant separates clean water from the dirty layer filled with bacteria, viruses, and waste. Some of what's left can be turned into crop fertilizers! Eventually, the clean water returns to rivers or lakes for reuse. It sure is a long journey for a little waste to travel! Well.. Unless you had explosive diarrhea.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), wipes and trash cause about *\$441 million* in damage to wastewater systems every year. That's why choosing the right material to flush is very important.

Imagine you flushed a bunch of paper towels. They go through the same process, but they won't rip properly. They end up in land and water, which is bad for the environment. Animals might eat them and get hurt. These small clogs can grow into city-wide problems that cost millions to fix.

The solution is very simple: flush only toilet paper and nothing else. Toilet paper breaks apart easily in water; "flushable" wipes and facial tissues do not. Another solution is not to waste toilet paper for your butt! Use only 4-5 sheets each time, or else you might flood your bathroom and make your parents very, *very* mad.

In one real case, a city sewer had to remove 12 tons of toilet paper because people overused it. Workers had to dig it all out by hand!

Do what's best for your environment and others. The Earth will get sick if we don't take care of it. Always do what you can do for the safety of yourself and others- show integrity! Remember- every flush matters. Be smart, flush smart, and save our water!