

OTTAWA PRO PLUMBING



Drain Cleaning

Clogged drains, hydro-jetting, snaking, and drain maintenance

3 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

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Q1

How do I unclog a double kitchen sink?

Start with the garbage disposal side if you have one - turn it off and disconnect power, then try plunging that side first since clogs often originate there. If no disposal, begin with whichever side drains slower.

The key to double sink success is proper plunging technique. Fill the clogged side with 3-4 inches of hot water, then completely seal the other drain with a wet rag or second plunger. This creates the pressure needed to push the clog through. Use a cup plunger (not a toilet plunger) and plunge vigorously for 30-60 seconds. The water should start draining if you've broken up the blockage.

If plunging fails, try the baking soda method. Remove standing water, pour 1/2 cup baking soda down the drain, followed by 1/2 cup white vinegar. Cover both drains with plugs or wet rags for 15 minutes, then flush with hot water. This works well for grease and food particle clogs common in kitchen sinks.

Ottawa homes often have older cast iron or galvanized pipes that are more prone to buildup and recurring clogs. If your double sink clogs frequently, especially if both sides back up simultaneously, this typically indicates a problem in the main drain line rather than just the sink trap. Kitchen sink clogs can also be complicated by Ottawa's hard water, which accelerates mineral buildup in pipes.

Avoid chemical drain cleaners in kitchen sinks - they can damage pipes and are dangerous if they splash back. Never use them if you have a garbage disposal. If the simple methods above don't work within 30 minutes, or if sewage backs up into the sink, it's time to call a professional. **Persistent double sink clogs often require drain snaking or camera inspection** to identify blockages in the branch line or main drain.

For recurring kitchen sink issues or if you suspect a main line problem, Ottawa Pro Plumbing offers camera inspection services to pinpoint the exact location and cause of stubborn clogs.

Q2

Do drain screens actually prevent clogs?

Drain screens are moderately effective at preventing clogs, but they're not a complete solution. They catch hair, food particles, and debris before they enter your pipes, which definitely reduces the frequency of clogs, but they won't prevent all blockages.

Hair and soap buildup are the main culprits in bathroom drains, and a good mesh screen will catch most hair before it combines with soap scum to form those stubborn clogs. In kitchen sinks, screens prevent food scraps from

going down the drain, which is especially important since Ottawa's older homes often have smaller drain lines that clog more easily. However, grease, soap residue, and mineral deposits will still accumulate over time regardless of screens.

The effectiveness depends on the type of screen and how well you maintain it. Fine mesh screens catch more debris but need cleaning more frequently. Coarser screens are easier to maintain but let smaller particles through. Many Ottawa homeowners find that screens reduce their need for professional drain cleaning from every 1-2 years to every 3-4 years, which saves money in the long run.

Regular maintenance is crucial - dirty screens can actually cause water to back up and create their own problems. Clean screens weekly and replace them when the mesh starts to break down. Even with screens, you should still avoid pouring grease down drains and use enzyme cleaners monthly to break down soap and organic buildup.

For persistent clog issues despite using screens, there may be underlying problems like root intrusion, pipe bellies, or scale buildup that require professional attention. Camera inspection can identify these issues before they become major blockages.

Q3

Can boiling water unclog a drain safely?

Boiling water can help with minor grease clogs in metal pipes, but it's not safe for all drain types and won't clear most serious blockages. You need to know your pipe material before trying this method.

When boiling water works: It's most effective for kitchen sink drains clogged with grease, soap scum, or food particles in metal pipes. The hot water can dissolve and flush away these softer blockages. Pour the water slowly in 2-3 stages, allowing it to work between pours rather than dumping it all at once.

Critical safety warning: Never use boiling water on PVC or older plastic pipes, which are common in Ottawa homes built after the 1970s. The extreme heat can soften, warp, or crack these pipes, leading to expensive repairs and potential water damage. Most bathroom drains and many kitchen drains use PVC connections that could be damaged.

What boiling water won't fix: Hair clogs, solid objects, tree roots, or mineral buildup require mechanical removal or professional drain cleaning. If the water backs up immediately or drains very slowly after your boiling water attempt, you're dealing with a blockage that needs proper equipment like a drain snake or hydro jetting.

Safer alternatives include hot (not boiling) water with dish soap, or a mixture of baking soda and vinegar followed by hot water. These methods are gentler on your pipes while still helping with minor clogs.

For persistent drainage issues in Ottawa homes, professional drain cleaning with camera inspection typically costs \$200-350 and identifies the exact cause and location of blockages. This prevents the trial-and-error approach that can sometimes make problems worse.

If you're unsure about your pipe material or the clog persists after gentle attempts, it's worth having a professional assessment to avoid costly pipe damage.

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