



UNBLOCKTOBER

SAVE OUR SEWERS AND SEAS

YOUR GUIDE TO COMPLETING

UNBLOCKTOBER

A MONTH TO SAVE OUR SEWERS AND SEAS

Your Business Resource Pack

2019

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Welcome to Unblocktober 2019

If you're reading this, welcome and congratulations!

You're one of the many organisations across the UK who are committed to helping drive real behavioural and environmental change in the country by taking part in Unblocktober – the world's first month-long, national campaign to improve the health of our drains, sewers, watercourses and seas.

Why Unblocktober?

If you don't already know why we need Unblocktober and your help, let me explain.

To put it lightly, us humans haven't always treated the natural and built environment in the kindest way.

There are many examples of this that will jump to mind, such as deforestation, increasing carbon emissions, and so on.

But for many decades we've also adopted habits at home that – without many of us knowing – have caused our surroundings, watercourses and rivers severe distress.

Millions upon millions of us have been putting items, materials and substances into our drainage systems and sewers that lead to untold damage on the environment around us.

Flooding. Fatbergs. Plastic pollution. The list goes on.

As a result, we need to act decisively and quickly to change those bad habits and reverse the impact of our actions on our environment.

That's where Unblocktober comes in. And where you come in too...



Over to you

We need people just like you and your colleagues to make a big difference, without having to make a big effort.

All we want is for your organisation collectively to commit to stop pouring into your drains or flushing any of the items below for the month of October:

- **Cooking oil or fat**
- **Food - even crumbs!**
- **Anything containing plastic or hidden plastic**

It's so simple, but so effective. If we can join together as a nation this October and make the same commitment, the improvements to the health of the environment we live in will be huge. And even more effective if we can continue these habits beyond October.

So it's now over to you. But you're not alone - this handy resource pack will tell you everything you need to know about Unblocktober and how to complete it, so keep it by your side.

Thank you for joining us.



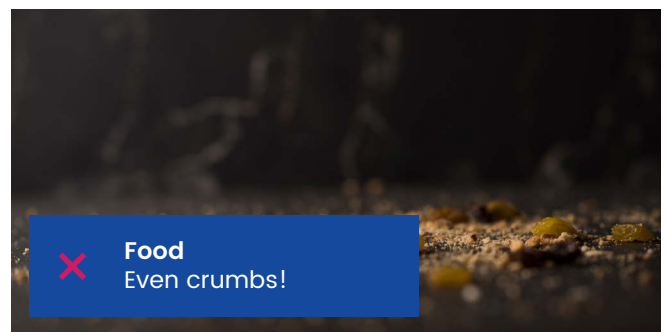
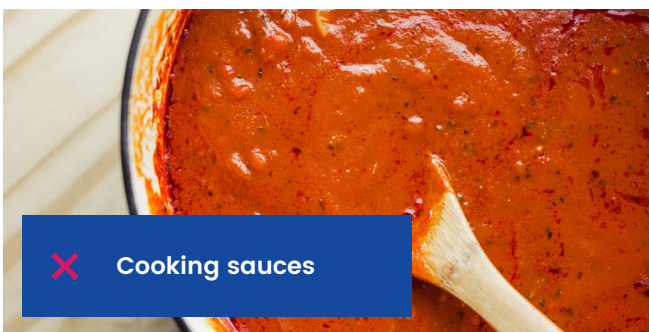
Michelle Ringland

Michelle Ringland, Head of Marketing, Lanes Group

How does it work?

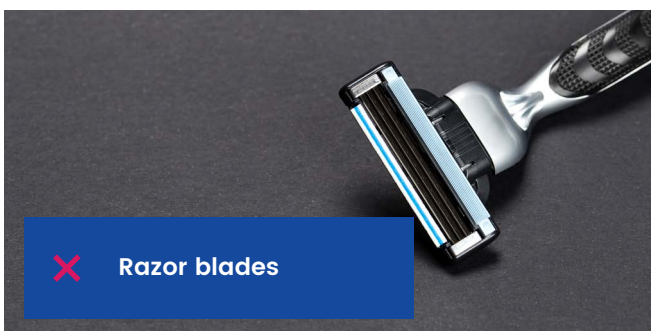
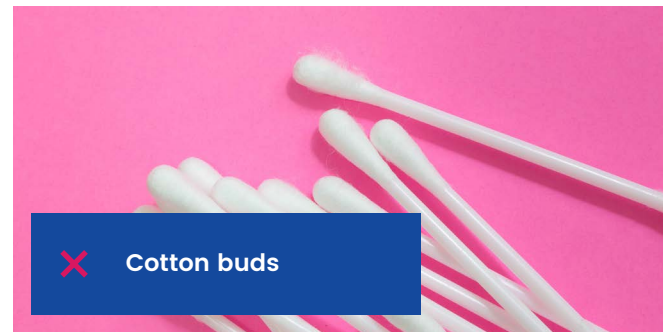
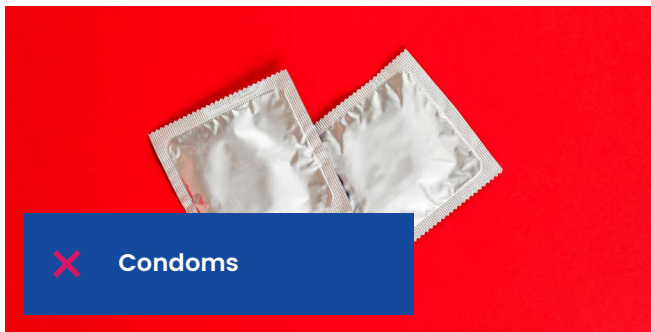
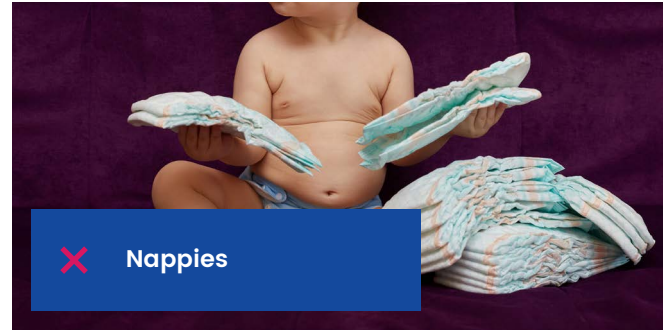
The concept behind Unblocktober is very simple.

For the calendar month of October, we want you and your colleagues to avoid putting any of the below down your sink or toilet:

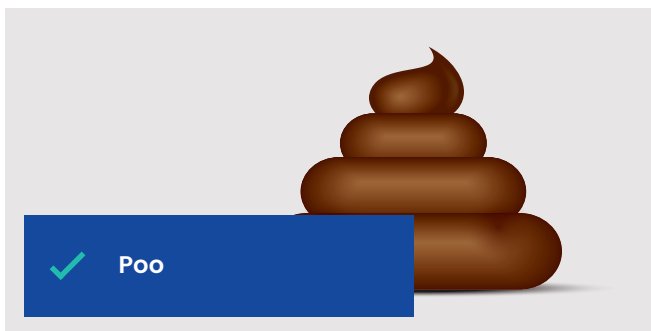


Anything containing plastic, including:





Instead only the following should go into your drainage system:



Easy!

We'd like you to keep a note of your progress using the calendar you can find in this guide.

And we'd also like you to tell your friends, family and connections about your progress and why you're getting involved.

We're relying on you to help spread the word!

What's more, we've also sent you a badge you can add to your organisation's website to show off the fact you're supporting such a worthy cause! Display it with pride!

The problem with fats, oils, grease, food and fatbergs

Why is it that fats, oils, grease (**FOG**) and food are dangerous, abusive and inconvenient to the sewer system and environment?

Well, when FOG is poured down the drain, it collects in the sewers and begins to harden into big congealed masses that cause serious blockages.

It might have entered the drain in liquid form, but the conditions below the surface cause it to solidify.

The biggest of these masses are called fatbergs, which can cause wastewater to back up in the sewers and lead to flooding in homes, businesses and pollution in the streets, rivers and watercourses.

Not only does this cause an environmental problem, it could cause a public health problem if foul water ends up in our homes and streets.

According to Southern Water:



£90 million is spent every year clearing these kinds of blockages

FOG blockages and fatbergs can break important wastewater pumping stations that keep our drainage system running smoothly

More than 3,000 homes are flooded in the UK every year because of FOG blockages and fatbergs

What about food?

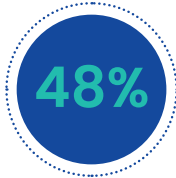
Even the smallest pieces of food can clog up your 'u' bends and drains and combine with FOG to create even bigger blockages.

Depending on the food, it might be:

- 1 **Stringy**, wrapping around other items in our pipes
- 2 **Sticky**
- 3 **Oily or slimy**
- 4 **Hard**

All of which makes blockages more likely.

FOG and fatberg statistics



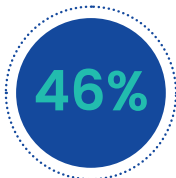
48% of the nation pour fats, oils and grease (FOG) down their drains



More than 3,000 homes are flooded in the UK every year because of FOG blockages and fatbergs*



£90m - the amount spent every year on clearing fatbergs*



46% of women have flushed tampons down the toilet



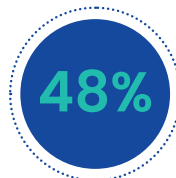
4.8 pieces of period care waste are found for every 100 metres of beach cleaned**



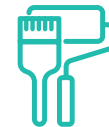
20% of men have flushed a condom down the toilet



300,000 blockages are caused by wet wipes each year



48% of the public have flushed wet wipes



79% wash paint down their drains



180 million - estimated number of cotton buds flushed down our toilets each year



8 million tonnes of plastic is dumped in the ocean every year

*Stats provided by Southern Water

**Stats provided by Marine Conservation Society

All other stats provided by Lanes Group plc

The problem with plastic and hidden plastic

Plastic causes a wide range of environmental issues, especially when it is not disposed of correctly.

Unlike other materials, such as paper, plastic is not biodegradable. That means it will not naturally be broken down by microorganisms.

If you buried a paper bag and a plastic bag in soil, the paper one would decompose within a few months – but the plastic one would remain intact for up to 1,000 years, causing damage to our environment.

Plastic is a manmade material that consists of many toxins, which have the potential to cause air, water and land pollution – creating problems for plants, wildlife, and humans.

The toxic chemicals that plastic releases can even make their way into the human bloodstream and have been linked to lots of medical conditions, such as cancer and birth defects.

What's more, animals sometimes get tangled in plastic and they mistake it for food, leading them to eat it or feed it to their offspring – risking their lives.

It's important that non-biodegradable materials are disposed of correctly, which many of us do by recycling. At school and at home, you will use different coloured bins to dispose of different items such as plastic packaging, glass, food waste, and paper.

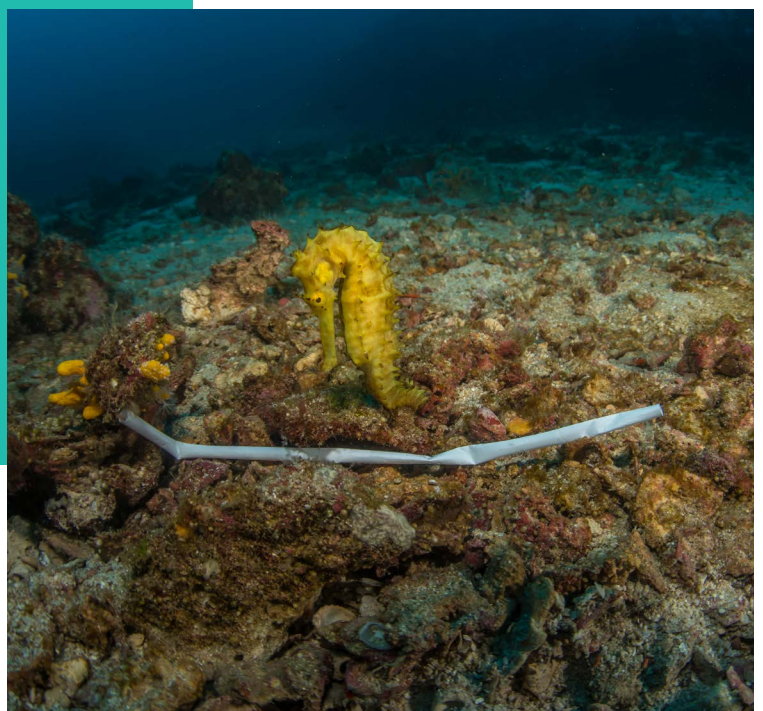
Recycling helps us reduce the amount of plastic that goes to landfill and into the sea. It also enables us to re-use the recycled materials, which also reduces the amount of energy that would be used to create new materials.

But we need to do more – **every year, 8 million tonnes of plastic is dumped into the ocean!**

Common plastic items that most people are familiar with include:

- **Plastic bottles**
- **Plastic bottle caps**
- **Drinks straws and stirrers**
- **Plastic bags**

However, unfortunately there is also **hidden plastic** in lots of everyday items, which are not being disposed of correctly because people are not even aware that they contain plastic.



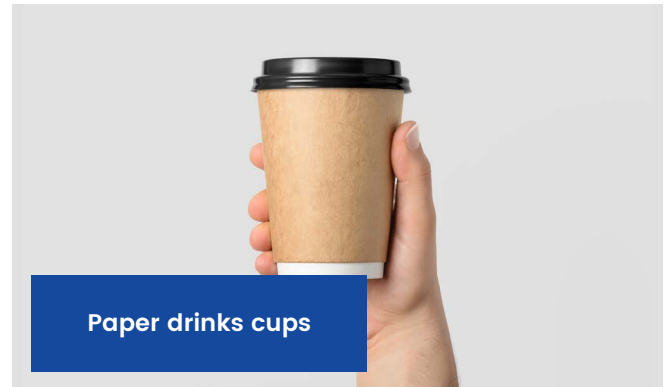
What is hidden plastic?

There are hidden plastics in lots of everyday products and, because they're hidden and because people don't know they're there, they're often disposed of incorrectly.

In fact, lots of items that contain hidden plastics get flushed down the toilet, making their way into our drains, sewers, and, often, our rivers and seas. So don't treat your toilet like a trashcan!



Most popular brands use a material called polypropylene, a sealing plastic, to help prevent tea bags from falling apart when they are used. So, even when they are put in the food waste bin or compost heap, not all of the tea bag will fully decompose.



Although they are predominantly made of paper, disposable hot drinks cups handed out at your favourite cafes and coffee shops contain a plastic lining that helps to keep your drink warm. This prevents the cups from being able to be fully recycled.



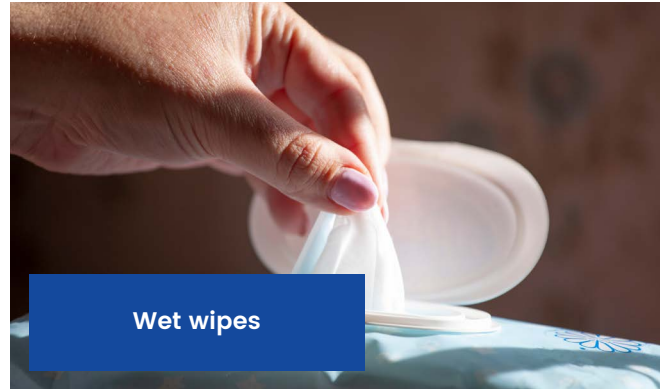
Chewing on plastic doesn't sound very nice, does it? But lots of popular chewing gums contain tiny plastic particles. The 'gum base' written on the packet often contains polyethylene, which is used to make plastic bottles and plastic bags, or polyisobutylene, which is a rubber used to make tyre inner tubes.



Most condoms are made from latex, which is a type of rubber that contains similar elements to plastic, but some of them are still labelled as being flushable when they are not. Even latex-free condoms contain a different plastic, most commonly polyurethane.



Lots of popular face scrubs used to include plastic 'microbeads', which did not decompose when they were washed down drains, but a law came into place on 19th June 2018 that banned companies from selling any products containing microbeads - a welcome change in legislation.



Plastic is woven into wet wipes to make them more durable - but this also makes them non-biodegradable. There are lots of different wet wipes available, such as cleaning, antibacterial and baby wipes, and many of them are incorrectly labelled as flushable.



Although the tips of cotton buds are biodegradable, they are often attached (with plastic-based glue) to nonbiodegradable plastic sticks.

Some 1.8 billion plastic-stemmed cotton buds are used every year, and it is estimated that around 10% of these - 180 million - are flushed down toilets. This pollutes our rivers and seas, and sea life, such as sea horses, have been pictured mistaking them for food.

As a result, the government has confirmed a ban on plastic-stemmed cotton buds in England from April 2020.



Lanes Group recently found that as many as 31% of the public have flushed a wet wipe down the toilet.

Wet wipes make up around 93% of the material in sewer blockages, and are estimated to cause around 300,000 blockages every year, at a cost of £100 million to the country.

In April 2018, Thames 21 - an organisation that works with communities to look after London's waterways - found more than 5,000 wet wipes in one small area of the Thames riverbed. It was the highest number of wipes to be found in a single place in the UK.



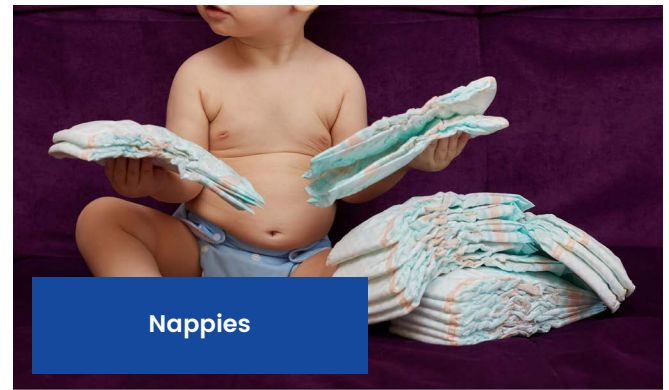
Hidden plastic is also woven into lots of the most popular tampon and sanitary towel brands, to make them more durable. Because of the plastic inside these products, they will not fully decompose when they are put in the bin.

What makes things worse is that lots of people wrongly flush them down the toilet.



In fact, Lanes Group found that as many as 20 million women in the UK have flushed at least one tampon or similar period care product down the toilet in their lifetime.

In addition, according to the Marine Conservation Society, in the UK alone, 4.8 pieces of period care waste are found for every 100 metres of beach cleaned.



Similarly to sanitary towels and tampons, nappies contain hidden plastics to make them more absorbent and durable. Because of this, they are not biodegradable and can actually take 500 years just to start to break down.





UNBLOCKTOBER
SAVE OUR SEWERS AND SEAS

PRINT OUT AND KEEP POSTER

**DO NOT PUT THESE
DOWN THE SINK
OR TOILET**



Butter/margarine/lard



Cooking sauces



Food - even crumbs!



Wet wipes



Period products - tampons,
applicators and wrappers



Period products - sanitary/
menstrual pads and towel



Nappies



Condoms



Cotton buds



Contact lenses



Bandages and plasters



Razor blades



Dental floss



Cooking oil

**ONLY PUT THESE
DOWN THE TOILET**



Water



Pee



Poo



Toilet paper

Tips and useful products to succeed

How to avoid pouring FOG down your drains

The following must not go down your drains:

- **Butter**
- **Cooking oil**
- **Grease from cooking**
- **Lard**
- **Margarine**
- **Sauces containing any of the ingredients above**



DIY bird feed fat balls

During the winter months, food can be scarce for birds, who are in desperate need of energy. One great energy source is a bird feed fat ball and, while you can buy them ready made, it's much more fun to make your own using leftover suet or lard!

You'll need:

- **Vegetable/beef suet or lard**
- **Bird seed mix**
- **A mixing bowl**
- **An ice cream scoop/spoons (optional)**
- **Pieces of string**

Tips

- Fat and oil left in pans and trays after cooking should be collected in a container and left to cool and congeal
- Once solidified, it should be emptied into the bin
- Give plates and pans an extra wipe with kitchen roll before they go into the sink or dishwasher
- Alternatively, collected FOG can be sent off to an Environment Agency-licensed waste oil collector, who can help to recycle it for use in biodiesel production or incinerate it to produce electricity. Just search for 'waste oil collector' in a search engine and review the options available to you

Step 1

Mix one part suet/lard with two parts bird seed in a mixing bowl.

Aim for an even spread of seeds throughout the lard.

Step 2

Mould the mixture together into balls with your hands - or with spoons or an ice cream scoop if you don't want to get your hands dirty!

Step 3

Add a piece of string into each ball so that you can hang it out in your garden once they're ready.

Step 4

Put the fat balls into a fridge for a few hours to set. Once they're hard, they're ready to hang outside!

How to avoid putting food down your drains

The following must not go down your drains:

- **Food scraps and crumbs**
- **Dressings**
- **Dairy products**
- **Sauces**
- **Icing**
- **Batters**



Useful products



Sink Strainer

Sink strainers are cost-effective drain protectors that sit in the plughole of your kitchen sink.

They act as a screen to let water flow through into your drainage system, but nothing larger. That means they catch and collect crumbs and pieces of food. As strainers can be removed at will, you can dispose of the collected food in the bin.

Even the most dedicated of us might find accidentally put crumbs or food in the sink, but the sink strainer is a genuine safety net in your home to help to protect your drains and therefore ideal for Unblocktober and beyond. Just remember that this won't prevent liquid FOG entering the system, so you'll need to take extra measures to guard against that.



Food Scraper

There are a number of different types of scraper, such as:

- **Bowl scrapers**
- **Plate scrapers**
- **Dough scrapers**
- **Pastry scrapers**
- **Pan scrapers**

As the name suggests, they're all used for the same thing - scraping even the smallest bits of food off your kitchenware.

Using a food scraper will help to make sure not even the smallest crumb of food ends up in your drains.

Tips

- Make sure you get every bit of food off your plates, bowls, pots and pans into your bin
- Use kitchen roll to wipe away any excess food before washing up and put it in the bin too

How to avoid putting hidden plastics down your drain

The following must not go down your toilets:

- **Wet wipes**
- **Period care products**
- **Nappies**
- **Condoms**
- **Cotton buds**
- **Contact lenses**
- **Bandages and plasters**
- **Dental floss**



Tip

- It's simple – be a binner, not a sinner! Put all of the items above into your bin, rather than flushing them.

Useful products

There are many eco-friendly alternatives to common items that contain hidden plastics and help to save our sewers and seas.



Convenient bathroom bins

Many people – and organisations, even – don't have bins in their bathrooms, which can contribute to the wrong items being flushed down the toilet.

All businesses of all sizes must adhere to legislation requiring a suitable means for the disposal of sanitary dressings in women's toilets. That means installing a sanitary unit or other bin for the disposal of sanitary waste in every cubicle.

It's also worth ensuring there are bins in the men's toilets, so that there are means for disposing other items containing plastics that might be used, and flushed, by men.



'Fine to Flush' wet wipes

The vast majority of wet wipes are not biodegradable and therefore are not safe to be flushed, even if it says on the packaging that they are 'flushable'.

However, Water UK, which represents water and sewerage companies in the UK, has developed a range of stringent tests that wet wipes must pass. If they do, it means they do not contain plastic and will break down in the sewer system. The organisation has created the 'Fine to Flush' symbol – if you see this symbol it means they are safe to flush, but if you don't, they aren't.

Still, the best way to know you're not causing harm to the environment when you dispose of wet wipes is to be cautious and bin them.

Example brand: [Natracare](#)



Eco-friendly care products

There is now a whole host of eco-friendly period care products that mean you no longer have to be worried about contributing to the plastic problem.



Organic tampons and pads

For consumers who are keen to stick with what's most familiar to them, a selection of disposable menstrual tampons and pads are now available that are made from organic cotton, and do not feature any plastic, meaning they are fully biodegradable.

Example brands: [TOTM](#), [Natracare](#), [Hey Girls](#), [Flo](#), [OHNE](#), [DAME](#)



Menstrual cups

These medical-grade silicone cups collect the flow of blood instead of absorbing it, meaning it can be easily washed and reused for up to a decade. The savings this provides compared to regularly buying tampons can be considerable, and the entire process creates zero waste beyond the initial manufacturing.

Example brands: [TOTM](#), [Kegel8](#), [Mooncup](#), [Intimina Lily Cup](#), [DivaCup](#)



Washable cloth pads

Cloth pads work the same way as disposable pads, except these can be reused simply by rinsing them in cold water or adding them to a normal washing load. Again, they contain none of the plastic or chemical content of disposable pads, and create no waste.

Example brands: [Lady Days](#), [Feminine Wear Ltd](#), [Honour Your Flow](#)



Period pants

Washable period pants resemble conventional underwear but come with built-in absorption technology, meaning they function similarly to a menstrual pad. They can be worn for up to eight hours and hold much more liquid than standard tampons and towels, eliminating the need for plastic, while also offering convenience benefits.

Example brands: [WUKA](#), [Flux](#), [Modibodi](#)



Eco-friendly accessories

In addition to these, a range of new period accessories are emerging with similarly eco-friendly principles. These include DAME's flagship product D, the world's first reusable tampon applicator, and the biodegradable tampon and pad disposal bags sold by [FabLittleBag](#).



Reusable nappies

Up until as recently as the 1950s and before the advent of the disposable nappy, most of the world used reusable nappies that had to be washed.

While the disposable nappy gave families greater freedom and convenience, it also had a big impact on the environment, with us disposing of countless numbers of nappies full of hidden plastic. And often down the toilet.

However, these days there is a wide range of reusable nappies available that are as easy to put on as disposables, and machine washable - so they are much easier to care for than the cloth nappies of old. And, crucially they're eco-friendly.

Example brands/sellers: [Lizzie's Real Nappies](#), [The Nappy Lady](#), [Bambino Mio](#), [Little Lamb Nappies](#), [Easy Peasy Nappies](#)



Makeup wipes

Makeup wipes alternatives: [facehalo](#)



Eco-friendly cotton buds

There are a number of brands and sellers that offer eco-friendly cotton buds made from bamboo or paper stems.

They include: [It's All About You](#), [No Plastic Shop](#), [Simply Gentle](#)



GUPPYFRIEND washing bag

Did you know that when you wash synthetic clothing garments, such as fleeces, tiny plastic microfibers are released into our washing machines and, consequently, potentially into our waterways? These tiny fibers then pose a health threat to plants and animals.

The GUPPYFRIEND Washing Bag helps to reduce fiber shedding, protects your clothes and filters the few fibers that do break, to reduce microfiber pollution.

[GUPPYFRIEND](#)

OCT

2019

Print this off to keep track of your progress. Tick off each day where you have avoided putting any banned items down your sink or toilet – **it's that simple!**



UNBLOCKTOBER
SAVE OUR SEWERS AND SEAS

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
29	30	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	1	2

How to share your progress

The best way for Unblocktober to succeed and have a significant impact is for you to share your progress throughout the month.

Post updates, pictures, video diaries, and tips for other participants – the more the merrier! This way we can spread the word and get as many people as possible on board with Unblocktober this year, and for many years to come.

Use the hashtag **#Unblocktober** on social media to tell the world about how you're getting on, and if you include the following tags in your posts, we will do our best to share your updates with our own networks too!



CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT

Congratulations! You have helped to turn this year's October into Unblocktober. By making small changes to your habits, you have made a big impact on our sewers and seas, so thank you for your effort and here's to making it Unblocktober all year round!

Lanes Group plc

Signature



UNBLOCKTOBER
SAVE OUR SEWERS AND SEAS

October 2019

Date



Unblocktober is brought to you by Lanes Group

The UK's largest privately owned drainage contractor with three branded companies and several operating divisions across the UK.

Our services include:

- **Drain and sewer cleaning**
- **Drain and sewer inspection**
- **Drain and sewer repair**
- **Drain and sewer relining**
- **CCTV surveying**
- **Septic tank installation & cleaning**
- **Home buyers drain surveys**
- **Efficient waste removal**

For more information, visit www.lanesfordrains.co.uk or call us on **0800 526 488**.

