

Keeping Water "Fresh"

- Burns, rivers and lochs may be the water supply for a remote house or tent; "go" at least 30 metres from any water.
- Ideally use antiseptic handwash gel but otherwise cleansing wipes or if using soap ensure it is biodegradable; even then do not use it directly in the river or loch.
- Always take drinking water from above a camp, and walk downhill and away from water to go to the toilet.
- Always check for contamination at least 30 metres above the point of extraction.



Toilet Paper and Sanitary Items

Both should be carried out as they can take a long time to breakdown, and animals may dig them up. This can be done hygienically and without smell using re-sealable bags or containers.

Toilet Facilities

Never miss an opportunity to use a proper toilet, and if a dry or composting toilet, it only functions if everyone follows the instructions.

General Hygiene

It is essential to clean your hands after going to the toilet, particularly before handling food. The best option is handwash gel that does not require water.

Talk About It

Discussing outdoor sanitation will increase awareness, and raise standards. The MCofS will update changes to this advice on our website and magazine, The Scottish Mountaineer.



Mountaineering Council of Scotland

The Old Granary
West Mill Street
Perth PH1 5QP
01738 493 942
info@mcofs.org.uk
www.mcofs.org.uk



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Where to "Go" in the Great Outdoors



The Mountaineering Council of Scotland

Dealing with the sanitation in an hygienic and environmentally-sensitive way is a vital outdoor skill. This leaflet has been compiled in consultation with health and environmental professionals.

The Main Issues Are:

1. Human Health

Cryptosporidium, Campylobacter, Aeromonas, E. coli O157 and Giardia are all gut pathogens that can be caught from drinking infected water. The number of cases is low, but carelessness could result in one of these potentially serious conditions. Giardia cases are increasing. You may still be infectious if you have just returned from a developing country with an upset stomach. Take extreme care if you go into the mountains.

2. Environment

Some sites are particularly sensitive due to the ecological importance and/or numbers of people leading to cumulative impact.

3. Visual Pollution and Smell

Carrying out solids is best. Burying is next best but needs to be done sensitively. Urine is less harmful than excrement, but it is safest to follow the same practices as for solids, except obviously carrying out.



What to do with "it"

Carry Out Techniques

Some countries require visitors to "carry out" in wilderness areas. Specialist facilities are available for use at Cairngorm car park – see the Cairngorm Ranger Service. Otherwise, one option is to defecate on toilet paper, then use a biodegradable (cornstarch-based is good) bag to pick it up, then carry out in a plastic sealable container (labelled and kept only for that purpose). The human waste can then be flushed down a toilet as usual, and the bag thrown in the rubbish. The canister should be disinfected.



On-Site Disposal Techniques

In some areas burying it is not advised, such as on high plateaux and other particularly ecologically sensitive areas, or popular wild camping spots. In these places extra effort must be made to carry out.

- Avoid toileting within 50 metres of paths or 200 metres of huts, bothies and crags, and never in caves.
- Dig a 15 cm (6") hole in the soil and bury your excrement. A trowel makes this much easier.
- Dig down into the soil through any snow. Burying excrement in the snow does not work when the snow melts!
- When digging a hole is absolutely impossible and you are in a very remote place, spread excrement thinly or arrange rocks such that air can circulate. Avoid just putting a rock on top as it slows decomposition.



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