

# Creating a Cathole: Safe and Sanitary Waste Disposal

In an extended emergency where municipal services are down, proper waste disposal is critical to prevent contamination and disease. **A cathole is a simple, eco-friendly method for disposing of human waste.**

## Step 1: Choose the Right Location

- **Stay at least 200 feet (about 70 adult steps) from any water source** (rivers, lakes, wells, or groundwater sources).
- **Pick a spot away from campsites, homes, and trails** to prevent contamination and odor issues.
- **Look for loose, organic soil** that will break down waste faster—avoid rocky or sandy areas.

## Step 2: Dig the Cathole

- **Use a collapsible shovel** to dig a hole **6 to 8 inches deep (15-20 cm) and 4 to 6 inches wide (10-15 cm)**.
- This depth allows bacteria to break down waste while keeping it safely contained.
- **Dig in a sunny location, if possible**, as sunlight helps speed up decomposition.

## Step 3: Use the Cathole Properly

- **Deposit waste directly into the hole.**
- **Use biodegradable toilet paper** and bury it with the waste. If you use regular toilet paper, pack it out in a sealed bag.
- **Sprinkle a small amount of soil, wood ash, or sawdust** over the waste after each use to control odor and aid decomposition.
- **Cover the waste with soil immediately** after each use to deter animals and minimize smell.

#### Step 4: Close the Cathole When Full

- **When the hole is about 2/3 full, fill it completely with soil.**
- **Pack the soil down firmly** to prevent animals from digging it up.
- **Mark the spot discreetly** (e.g., with a small stick), but avoid leaving permanent markers so others do not reuse the same area.

#### Step 5: Long-Term Considerations

- **If multiple people need to use catholes over several days, space them out** at least 200 feet apart.
- **For longer-term needs, consider digging a trench latrine** instead—a trench at least 12 inches deep is more efficient than multiple small catholes.

#### Additional Tips for Safe Waste Disposal

- ✓ **Use biodegradable bags inside the cathole** if available but avoid plastic bags that do not break down.
- ✓ **Wash hands thoroughly after handling waste**—use soap, hand sanitizer, or disinfectant wipes.
- ✓ **Do NOT dig catholes in flood-prone areas**—the waste could be washed into water sources.
- ✓ **Never burn human waste**—this will release harmful pathogens into the air.

#### Why the Cathole Method Works

- ✓ **Reduces disease risk** by containing human waste properly.
- ✓ **Speeds up decomposition** when used in rich, organic soil.
- ✓ **Minimizes environmental impact** compared to open dumping.
- ✓ **Simple and effective**—requires only a shovel and proper location selection.