

When you're washing your car in the driveway, remember, you're not just washing your car in the driveway.



All the soap, scum and oily grit runs along the curb, then into the stormdrain and directly into creeks, rivers and ultimately into our Great Lakes. This causes pollution, which is unhealthy for fish and contaminates our drinking water sources. You can easily avoid this whole mess. Wash your car sparingly and avoid washing it on the street or paved driveway. Or better yet, take it to a car wash that recycles the water and sends dirty water to the sanitary sewer.

Clean water makes Great Lakes!

[www.cleanlakes.ca](http://www.cleanlakes.ca)



## Clean water is important to all of us

It's up to all of us to make it happen. In recent years, sources of water pollution like industrial wastes from factories have been reduced. Now, a major percentage of water pollution comes from things like cars leaking oil and other engine fluids, excessive use of fertilizers, waste chemicals like paints and solvents, improper plumbing connections to stormdrains, and failing septic tanks. All these sources add up to a big pollution problem. But each of us can do small things to help clean up our water too. And that adds up to a pollution solution!

## Why do we need clean water?

Having clean water is of primary importance for our health and economy. Clean water provides drinking water, fish habitat, recreation, commercial opportunities, and adds beauty to our landscape. All of us benefit from clean water, and all of us play a role in getting and keeping our creeks, rivers, lakes and groundwater clean.

## What's the problem with car washing?

There's no problem with washing your car. It's just how and where you do it. Most soap contains some phosphates and other chemicals that harm fish and water quality. The soap, together with the dirt and oil washed from your car, flows into nearby stormdrains, which run directly into streams and lakes usually without any treatment. These chemicals and nutrients from the soap can cause excess algae to grow, which looks bad, smells bad, and harms water quality. As algae decay, the process uses up oxygen in the water that fish need.

## Car wash tips:

How can you wash your car and help keep our waters clean?

- The best choice is to take your car to a commercial car wash that recycles the water and sends dirty water to the sanitary sewer, especially if you plan to clean the engine or the bottom of your car. Many car washes re-use wash water several times before sending it to the sewer system for treatment.
- If you must wash your car at home, use soap sparingly. Use a hose nozzle with a trigger to save water.
- Pour your bucket of soapy water down the sink when you're done, not in the street.
- While washing your car on grass or gravel instead of on your paved driveway or the street may filter some of the contaminants and prevent run-off into a stormdrain, it can contaminate groundwater over time, and is not a highly suitable alternative.

To find out more about the impacts from washing your vehicle and what you can do to prevent water pollution, contact your local municipality or conservation authority.

## Partners for clean water:



Images courtesy of the Puget Sound Action Team, Washington State Department of Ecology in partnership with King County and the cities of Bellevue, Seattle, and Tacoma, Washington

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