

# AMMONIA

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## *Hazards of Ammonia*

Even though it's such a productive compound, extended exposure to ammonia can have severe repercussions for the human body. Exposure to ammonia can cause skin and eye irritation, agitation in the throat and lungs, making it harder to breathe due to its strong odor.

Moreover, using cleaning products consisting of ammonia in an enclosed area can make you prone to such health hazards. Fortunately, there are certain methods to dispose of ammonia safely. Here are the detailed instructions for those methods.

## **General steps for disposing of Ammonia :**

*Use caution if you have a septic system.*

It's not a good idea to dispose of ammonia down the sink if you have a septic system. Septic systems discharge wastewater back into the ground, so the ammonia can end up in the groundwater. This is especially problematic if you use a well for your water

**Solution :** Instead of pouring the ammonia down the sink, neutralize it and throw it away.

## **DILUTING AMMONIA WITH WATER :**

You've most likely been told once or twice that you shouldn't pour chemicals down the drain, and while this is typically extremely good advice, it's not necessarily true when it comes to ammonia (under the right circumstances, of course). Because ammonia is water soluble it can be put down the drain, but only when you follow these directions carefully.

### → TURN ON YOUR WATER FAUCET :

- ◆ If your ammonia solution is concentrated, it needs to be diluted with plenty of water, before disposal. Disposing of concentrated ammonia can be dangerous. Water tends to dilute concentrated ammonia, thus making it a lot safer. It is always best to use running water to dilute concentrated ammonia.
- ◆ You can also flush ammonia down your toilet. Simply pour it into the toilet water before flushing. Make sure you don't pour in more ammonia than there is water, however. If you have a lot of ammonia, use the sink or neutralize it

### → POUR THE AMMONIA INTO THE RUNNING STREAM OF WATER:

- ◆ Slowly pour out the ammonia so that there is more water than ammonia going down the sink. Doing so, you will be sure that by the time ammonia reaches the plumbing, it has been diluted. Diluting ammonia is important because if it is drained concentrated, it will harm your plumbing.
- ◆ Don't inhale the ammonia as you pour it.
- ◆ It's best to open a window or turn on a vent while you pour the ammonia down the sink.

### → RINSE OUT YOUR SINK WHEN YOU'RE DONE

- ◆ Splash water, or use the sprayer if you have one, all over the surface of your sink to ensure that there isn't ammonia left over when you're done.
- ◆ Using a clean towel or rag, wipe off the sides and the bottom of the sink to ensure that all of the ammonia is gone. This also helps to make sure that another chemical isn't added on top of the ammonia, which can be very dangerous. You don't want to combine different chemicals in the middle of your kitchen, and you certainly don't want to breathe in a toxic combination, either.

- ◆ When you're done, make sure your kitchen sink runs water for at least one more minute to make sure that the ammonia has been properly diluted and eliminated from your sink.

## Neutralize Your Ammonia

As discussed above, with a septic tank on your property, pouring ammonia down the drain is not a safe option. A perfect alternative would be to neutralize ammonia and have it thrown away.

Neutralizing ammonia is a complex procedure, for which we have put together the following tips.

Let's break it down.

### → 1. BAKING SODA, CAT LITTER, AND DRY SAND

- ◆ Using cat litter, dry sand and cat litter, create a mixture that will be used to neutralize the ammonia. This mixture can be used to effectively clean up spills or to mix with excess ammonia that you need to get rid of. It's also especially helpful if you have a large amount of ammonia that you need to discard.

### → 2. SPRINKLE YOUR MIXTURE OVER THE AMMONIA.

- ◆ Continue to add the dry mix to the ammonia until all of the ammonia has been soaked up. There shouldn't be any liquid left when you're done.

### → 3. PUT THE MIXTURE INTO A DISPOSABLE CONTAINER

- ◆ Using a plastic or wooden spoon, scoop the mixture you've made into a disposable container. Make sure that you wear some sort of face mask while you're doing this in order to avoid inhaling the fumes from the ammonia.

### → 4. THROW THE CONTAINER AWAY

- ◆ After you've neutralized the ammonia, it's safe to be thrown away. It can be thrown away in the container that you scooped the mixture into, or it can be thrown away in a trash bag. Either way, make sure that the ammonia is entirely neutralized before taking this step.

## DISPOSING OF THE AMMONIA CONTAINER :

### → Remove Access Ammonia

- ◆ Before disposing of the container, remove any excess ammonia that is left in it, even if the amount of ammonia is very little
- ◆ Concentrated ammonia is a hazardous material, regardless of how small its volume is. The fumes that ammonia gives off are as harmful as the substance itself.
- ◆ The residual ammonia in the container can mix with other substances and material in the trash, thus resulting in a bitter accident.

### → Rinse Out the Container of Ammonia

- ◆ Using clean, running water, wash away any ammonia that may be lingering in the bottle. The running water will also dilute any of the droplets that are hanging around inside of the container. It's safe to pour the rinse water down the sink, so don't be afraid of doing so.

### → Check the bottle to see if it's recyclable

- ◆ Most plastic cleaner bottles are recyclable. Simply check the bottom of the container to see if it has a symbol indicating you can recycle it. If it is recyclable, you can put it in with your other recyclables. Alternatively, you can take it to your local recycling center.

### → Throw it in the trash if you can't recycle it

- ◆ Put it in with the rest of your trash. It's best to throw it out in your outdoor trash can, if you can. That way you won't have to worry about accidental fume emissions

