PRINTABLE CLEANING GUIDE

How to Clean a Garbage Disposal

Remove odours, scour away built-up grime, and keep your disposal running smoothly - using only ice, salt, baking soda, vinegar, and citrus. No harsh chemicals, and no hands inside the unit, ever.



15 min	Weekly	Monthly	Cold only
DEEP CLEAN TIME	QUICK FLUSH	FULL DEEP CLEAN	WATER TEMPERATURE

Why It Starts to Smell

A garbage disposal does not have sharp blades that chop food. It has a spinning plate and impellers that push food against a grind ring. Small bits of food, grease, and slime collect on the splash guard, the grind ring, and the walls above the water line. That build-up - not the pipes below - is where most disposal smells come from. Cleaning those surfaces fixes the odour and helps the unit grind properly.

What You Will Need

- [ ] 2 cups ice cubes
- [ ] 1 cup coarse salt or rock salt
- [ ] 1/2 cup baking soda
- [ ] 1 cup white vinegar
- [ ] A few drops of dish soap
- [ ] 1 lemon or orange, cut into wedges
- [ ] Long-handled disposal brush or old toothbrush
- [ ] Tongs or needle-nose pliers
- [ ] Torch (flashlight)
- [ ] Rubber gloves

Safety First - Before You Start

Safety first - read before you start:

- [ ] NEVER put your hand or fingers inside the disposal, even when it is off
- [ ] Turn the power OFF at the wall switch, and unplug the unit or switch it off at the breaker before scrubbing or removing anything
- [ ] Use tongs or pliers - never fingers - to lift out any stuck object
- [ ] Always run COLD water when using the disposal. Hot water melts grease, which then re-solidifies further down the pipe
- [ ] Never use bleach or chemical drain cleaner in a disposal - it can damage seals, splash back, and harm a septic system

Step-by-Step Deep Clean

Step 1 - Clear and Flush

1. Remove the sink stopper and any strainer. Shine a torch into the drain and lift out any visible non-food items or stuck pieces with tongs.
2. Turn on a steady stream of cold water, switch the disposal on, and let it run for 30 seconds to flush loose debris through.
3. Switch the disposal off. Keep the power off for the scrubbing steps below.

Step 2 - Ice and Salt Scrub

1. Tip 2 cups of ice cubes into the disposal, followed by 1 cup of coarse salt.
2. Turn on the cold water, then switch the disposal on.
3. Run it until the ice is fully crushed and the grinding sound returns to normal - about 30 to 60 seconds. The ice scours the grind ring and plate, and the salt helps scrub and loosen stuck-on residue.
4. Switch off and rinse with cold water for another 30 seconds.



Deep Clean - Deodorise and Scrub

Step 3 - Baking Soda and Vinegar Deodorise

1. With the disposal OFF, pour 1/2 cup of baking soda into the drain.
2. Slowly add 1 cup of white vinegar. It will fizz - that fizz helps lift light residue and neutralise odours.
3. Cover the drain opening with the sink stopper to keep the fizz working inside, and leave it for 10 to 15 minutes.
4. Remove the stopper and flush with cold water while running the disposal for 30 seconds.

Note: Use baking soda and vinegar only for deodorising and light build-up. It does not clear a blocked pipe. Never mix vinegar with bleach or any other cleaner.

Step 4 - Scrub the Splash Guard and Flange

1. Confirm the power is OFF at the switch and the unit is unplugged or off at the breaker.
2. Dip a long-handled disposal brush or old toothbrush in water with a drop of dish soap and a little baking soda.
3. Scrub the top and underside of each rubber flap of the splash guard - this hidden underside holds the most odour-causing slime.
4. Scrub around the metal sink flange and the top rim of the drain opening.
5. Rinse by running cold water and the disposal briefly once scrubbing is finished and the brush is out.



Step 5 - Citrus Freshen

1. Cut a lemon or orange into small wedges, small enough for your unit to grind easily.
2. Turn on cold water, switch the disposal on, and feed in one wedge at a time.
3. Let the water run for 30 seconds after the last wedge to flush everything through. The citrus oils leave a fresh, clean scent.

If Something Goes Wrong

Problem	Likely cause	What to do safely
Still smells after cleaning	Slime left under the splash guard, or build-up in the sink overflow or dishwasher hose	Repeat Step 4 and scrub every flap underside. Clean the sink overflow opening. If the smell stays, run the dishwasher on its hottest cycle.
Humming but not grinding	Something is jammed, or the flywheel is stuck	Power OFF. Never reach in. Use the hex wrench in the centre socket underneath the unit and move it back and forth, or turn the plate with a wooden spoon handle from above. Remove the object with tongs, then press Reset.
Stopped and silent	Overload switch has tripped	Turn the wall switch OFF, let the unit cool for a few minutes, press the red Reset button on the underside, then try again with cold water running.
Leaking underneath	Loose flange, worn seal, or a cracked unit	Stop using it, dry the area, and tighten the sink flange bolts if loose. A leak from the bottom seal usually means the unit needs repair or replacement - call a plumber.
Slow draining	Grease or food build-up in the trap beyond the disposal	Do not use chemical drain cleaner. Place a bucket under the trap, loosen and clean the trap by hand, or call a plumber if you are not confident.

Quick 2-Minute Refresh - For Busy Days

When you do not have time for the full deep clean, this short routine keeps odours away until your monthly clean:

- [ ] Run cold water and grind a handful of ice cubes for 30 seconds
- [ ] Sprinkle 2 tablespoons of baking soda into the drain and leave for 5 minutes
- [ ] Flush with cold water while running the disposal for 30 seconds
- [ ] Wipe the flange and the top of the splash guard with a soapy cloth - power off first
- [ ] Grind 2-3 citrus wedges for a fresh finish

Remember: Cold water every time, small amounts of food, and a 30-second flush after grinding. Those three habits prevent most disposal smells and clogs.

Never Put These Down a Disposal

- [ ] Cooking oil, grease, or fat - it coats pipes and traps odours
- [ ] Coffee grounds - they form a dense sludge in the trap
- [ ] Pasta, rice, bread, and potato peelings - they swell or turn to paste
- [ ] Bones, fruit stones, and shells - too hard for the unit
- [ ] Fibrous foods - celery, onion skins, corn husks, artichokes - they tangle the plate
- [ ] Eggshells in large amounts - the membrane can wrap the impellers
- [ ] Non-food items, glass, metal, plastic, or cigarette ends
- [ ] Hot water while grinding fatty food, and any bleach or drain chemicals

Keep It Fresh - Maintenance Checklist

Every Use

- [ ] Run cold water before, during, and 30 seconds after grinding
- [ ] Feed food in small amounts - do not overfill
- [ ] Let the unit run until grinding is complete and only the motor and water sound remain

Weekly

- [ ] Grind a tray of ice cubes with cold water
- [ ] Wipe the sink flange and visible splash guard
- [ ] Run citrus wedges for freshness if needed

Monthly

- [ ] Do the full deep clean on pages 2-3, including the splash guard scrub
- [ ] Check under the sink for drips or damp patches
- [ ] Clean the dishwasher drain hose connection if smells return

Good habit:

Scrape plates into the bin or compost first. A disposal is for small food scraps rinsed off dishes - not a bin for a whole meal. Less food in means fewer clogs and fewer smells.

Notes

Date of last deep clean: _____ Next deep clean due: _____