



BLOCKED DRAINS

How to Diagnose Recurring Blocked Drains

To diagnose recurring blocked drains, record where and when the problem returns, check whether one or several fixtures are affected, and arrange a licensed plumber to inspect the drainage system. CCTV drain inspections, with cleaning where needed to obtain a clear view, can help identify roots, accumulated waste or damaged pipework. Use the findings to plan targeted repairs or maintenance.

On a busy commercial site, a recurring blockage means disruption, cleaning costs and repeat callouts. This guide covers what facility teams can safely observe, what an inspection should establish and how to prevent it happening again.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Record the pattern first.** Note where and when the blockage returns, and whether one fixture or several are affected. These are clues to guide the inspection, not a diagnosis.
- **Repeat blockages need investigation.** A drain that keeps blocking may have remaining buildup, ongoing waste input or an underlying pipe defect such as roots or damaged joints.
- **CCTV inspections identify the cause.** A camera can show obstructions, root entry, cracks and displaced joints, with cleaning first where needed for a clear view.
- **Clearing restores flow but may not fix the problem.** Repairs, relining, replacement or changes to waste practices depend on what the inspection finds.
- **Ask for a usable report.** It should cover the inspected line, footage, defect locations, cleaning results, limitations and recommended actions.
- **Prevention should match the confirmed cause.** Manage fats, oils and grease, keep wipes out of toilets and maintain external pits, with inspection history guiding the service schedule.

WHY DOES THE SAME DRAIN KEEP BLOCKING?

A recurring blockage can mean that material is continuing to enter the drain, a previous obstruction was only partly removed, or an underlying pipe defect remains. Common causes include:

- **Fats, oils and grease:** deposits can accumulate inside kitchen drainage and trap other waste.
- **Wipes and foreign objects:** unsuitable materials can obstruct toilets and sewer lines.
- **Tree roots:** roots can enter through cracks or faulty joints and restrict flow.
- **Damaged or displaced pipework:** defects can obstruct the line or catch debris.
- **Stormwater debris:** leaves, sediment and litter can restrict pits and drainage lines.

The symptoms alone cannot confirm the cause. A repeat blockage is a reason to investigate the pipe and its operating conditions.



WHAT SHOULD YOU CHECK BEFORE CALLING A PLUMBER?

Start with observations and existing records. Avoid opening maintenance holes, entering pits or attempting to work on underground drainage.

1 Identify the affected area

Is the problem limited to one sink or toilet, or are several fixtures backing up? A single affected fixture may indicate a local restriction. Several affected fixtures can point to a shared drainage line. These are clues to help direct the inspection, rather than a diagnosis.

2 Look for a pattern

Note whether problems follow kitchen peak periods, heavy rainfall, increased occupancy or recent building works. Rain-related symptoms may require assessment of stormwater drainage or possible rainwater entry into wastewater pipes; they do not prove a particular cause.

3 Review previous callouts

Check which line was cleared, what material was removed and whether a camera inspection was completed. Compare the location and findings across visits. Repeated work on the same section is useful evidence when deciding what to investigate next.

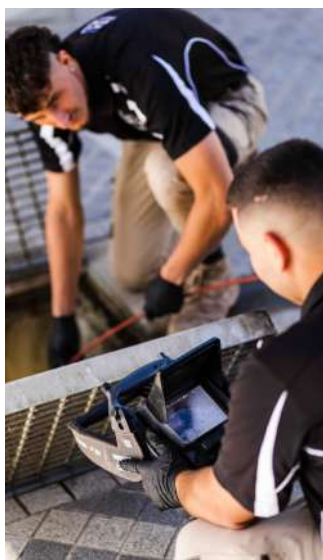
USE THIS SITE CHECKLIST

- ☒ Record the building, level, room and affected fixtures.
- ☒ Record the date, weather and site activity when symptoms appeared.
- ☒ Identify access restrictions, sensitive areas and suitable work windows.
- ☒ Note slow drainage, gurgling, odours, backups or visible overflow.
- ☒ Find previous job reports, CCTV footage and drainage drawings.
- ☒ Take photos from a safe location, without contacting wastewater.

WHAT CAN RECURRING DRAINAGE SYMPTOMS TELL YOU?

WHAT YOU OBSERVE	WHAT IT MAY INDICATE	ASK THE PLUMBER TO ASSESS
One fixture repeatedly drains slowly	A restriction in the fixture or nearby branch	The fixture, trap and connected drainage
Several fixtures back up together	A restriction in a shared line	The connected branch or main drainage line
The problem returns after clearing	Remaining buildup, ongoing waste input or a pipe defect	Cleaning results and the underlying pipe condition
External drainage struggles during rain	Debris, downstream restriction or a wider system issue	Pits, connected lines and system performance
Wastewater overflows	An urgent drainage failure	Immediate containment, clearance and investigation

HOW DOES A CCTV DRAIN INSPECTION HELP DIAGNOSE THE CAUSE?



A CCTV drain camera allows a plumber to examine the inside of accessible pipework. It can help identify visible obstructions, root entry, cracks and displaced joints, and document where further investigation or repair is needed.

If wastewater or debris prevents a clear view, the plumber may need to clear or clean the line first and inspect it again. Ask for a post-clearance check so the next recommendation is based on the condition of the pipe after the obstruction has been removed.

CCTV findings need to be interpreted alongside the site's drainage layout and performance. Additional assessment may be needed where access is limited or a suspected issue cannot be confirmed on camera.

JetBlack's hydraulic drainage inspections include CCTV assessment, performance checks and reporting to help customers understand drainage faults.

WHAT SHOULD A DRAIN INSPECTION REPORT INCLUDE?

Ask for a report that explains the findings in a way your team can use:

- ☒ The inspected line, access point and extent of the inspection.
- ☒ Relevant footage or images showing the obstruction or defect.
- ☒ The defect location, where it can be established.
- ☒ Any cleaning completed and the result of the follow-up check.
- ☒ Inspection limitations or areas requiring further investigation.
- ☒ Recommended actions, priorities and repair or maintenance options.

Keep the report with the site's maintenance records so future callouts can build on the findings.

WILL CLEARING THE DRAIN STOP IT BLOCKING AGAIN?

Clearing can restore flow and remove accumulated material. It does not necessarily resolve a damaged joint, root entry point or the ongoing disposal of unsuitable waste.

The appropriate response depends on the inspection. It may involve cleaning and changes to waste practices, targeted repairs, or pipe relining where the existing pipe and defect are suitable. Other damage may require replacement. Ask the plumber to explain why the proposed option suits the findings.



BLOCKED DRAIN SERVICES

JetBlack's blocked drain services combine inspection, drain clearing and follow-up checks, with recommendations for ongoing care.

HOW CAN COMMERCIAL SITES REDUCE REPEAT BLOCKAGES?

Match prevention to the confirmed cause. Kitchen teams should keep fats, oils and food scraps out of drains and maintain grease arrestors under the site's servicing arrangements. Bathroom users should keep wipes and other unsuitable items out of toilets. External drainage needs attention to leaves, litter and sediment.

Where stormwater is the concern, review the condition and maintenance of pits and connected lines through stormwater system maintenance.

Use the inspection history to set an appropriate service schedule. A high-use kitchen or a line with known defects may need different attention from a low-use area. JetBlack can support maintenance planning around site usage, drainage condition and operational priorities.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When should a blocked drain be treated as urgent?

Wastewater backing up into occupied areas, sewage overflow or rising water that threatens access or property needs prompt attention. Stop using affected fixtures, restrict access to the area and contact a plumber. JetBlack provides after-hours emergency support on 1300 538 255.

Can a camera inspection find tree roots?

A CCTV inspection can reveal roots inside the inspected pipe and may show their entry point. Cleaning may be needed first, and visibility or access limitations should be recorded.

How often should drains be inspected or cleaned?

There is no single interval that suits every commercial site. Base the schedule on drainage condition, previous blockages, waste loads, site use and the consequences of an overflow. Recurring symptoms should prompt investigation rather than waiting for the next planned service.

Are chemical drain cleaners a solution for recurring blockages?

They do not establish why the blockage keeps returning or repair damaged pipework. Arrange an assessment for repeat problems, and tell the attending plumber if chemicals have already been used.

Who is responsible if the blockage is outside the site?

Responsibility depends on the blockage location, asset ownership and local water authority arrangements. Ask the plumber to establish where the problem sits and advise whether the relevant authority needs to be involved.



SPEAK WITH YOUR ACCOUNT MANAGER

Need a clearer picture of your site's drainage?

If the same drain keeps causing problems, speak with your JetBlack Account Manager about previous callouts and an inspection of the affected line. Our team can help identify the cause and plan practical repairs or maintenance around your site's operations.

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