Sewer System

In larger Roman towns, people often got sick or died from drinking water that had been contaminated with sewage. Sewage is human waste . When people drink water with waste in it, they can get other people's [germs](http://www.historyforkids.org/scienceforkids/biology/cells/cells.htm) and get sick with [dysentery](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/science/medicine/dysentery.htm) or die. To fix this problem, many Roman towns built [aqueducts](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/romans/architecture/aqueducts.htm) to bring in fresh water from the hills outside of the towns. They also built public latrines and systems of sewage pipes to carry sewage out of the streets and dump it into the river. This was a big improvement on [Greek sewage arrangements](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/greeks/science/sewage.htm), where people just poured their waste into the street however they wanted.

There were also big public toilets that had room for lots of people at the same time. These sewers just dumped raw sewage into the river, which was better than leaving it lying around in the streets, but still did spread germs sometimes. The Romans didn't have any way of treating sewage to kill the germs, as we do today, and they didn't understand the need to do that. Some of these sewers are still being used today.

Aqueduct

As Roman towns got bigger, in the course of the [Roman Republic](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/romans/history/earlyrepublic.htm), it got too hard for the people who lived in the towns to get drinking and washing water. Because raw [sewage](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/romans/science/sewage.htm) was draining into the rivers, people who drank river water often got very [sick](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/science/medicine/dysentery.htm) or died. Local governments, first in the city of Rome and then elsewhere in the growing Empire, decided to build long stone channels to carry clean water from nearby hills to the towns. This is an aqueduct of the city of Rome. These were called aqueducts (ACK-wa-ducts), from the [Latin](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/romans/literature/latinlit.htm) word for water (aqua) and the Latin word for channel (ductus). By the time of the Empire, most Roman towns had at least one aqueduct to bring in fresh water, and big cities like Rome had ten or more. These aqueducts were quite a challenge to build. The engineering had to be just right in order to get the water to run through the channels and get to the city without stagnating in the channel or coming too fast into the city. They had to keep the slope the same all the time, so sometimes the aqueducts had to run on high arches, and other times along the ground in stone channels, or even under the ground in tunnels. Roman engineers built aqueducts all over the Roman Empire, from Syria to England. All Roman towns pretty much got clean drinking water from these aqueducts.

