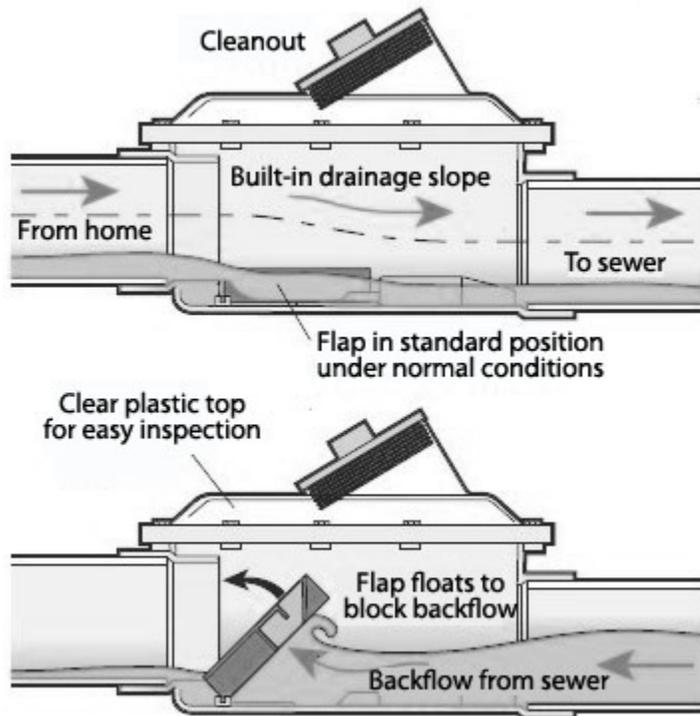


What exactly is a mainline backwater valve?



Developed by a plumbing contractor in the City of Edmonton, the mainline backwater valve was an innovation in sewer backup protection. Typically, plumbers would need to install check valves on all of the sewer branch lines in the home. This meant that the kitchen drain, the bathroom drain, the laundry drains all needed to have their own backflow protection. The biggest problem that was noted with each line having its own check valve was that these valves were all over the place, behind walls, under floors, out of sight and hard to access. Not only was that an annoyance to maintain these valves but when these [sewer drains were cleaned](#) a check valve could easily be damaged by the drain snake. Further, it would be very hard to tell if the check valve had been damaged, it would only be obvious when made evident by a flooding problem.

Enter the **mainline backwater valve**; this valve installs directly on the main sewer drain of the property and virtually eliminates the need for multiple check valves scattered throughout the house.

The real innovation of the mainline backwater valve is that it remains open while in its natural position. This is very important as the sewer line must be able to vent gases, the normally open position of the backwater valve allows for unrestricted flow of waste water out and sewer gases in. However, in the event of sewer backflow the valve closes, restriction the access of this backflow and preventing flooding problems. With earlier closed valves this was just feasible.

The inception of the backwater valve is quite interesting, and is a piece of Canadian plumbing history.

What's the difference between a backwater valve and a backflow preventer?



People are often curious what the difference is between these two devices. They sound similar enough that the confusion is not unfounded. Let's just clear this up, a backwater valve is a device that's installed on your sewer drain so as to prevent the backup of sewage water back into the drain pipe, which would otherwise flood your basement or wherever the drain pipe connects.

A backflow preventer on the other hand is to prevent the backflow of clean water back into a water source. Typically a water supply line is under heavy pressure and there is little chance of the water backing up, but under high-demand or problems such as a burst main this pressure will drop allowing for the potential backflow of contaminants into the water supply. To stop this backflow preventer devices are installed in high risk areas to keep the water supply fresh and clean.

To recap; backwater valves prevent the backflow of sewer water into your drains, and backflow preventers prevent the backflow of potentially contaminated water into the water supply lines.