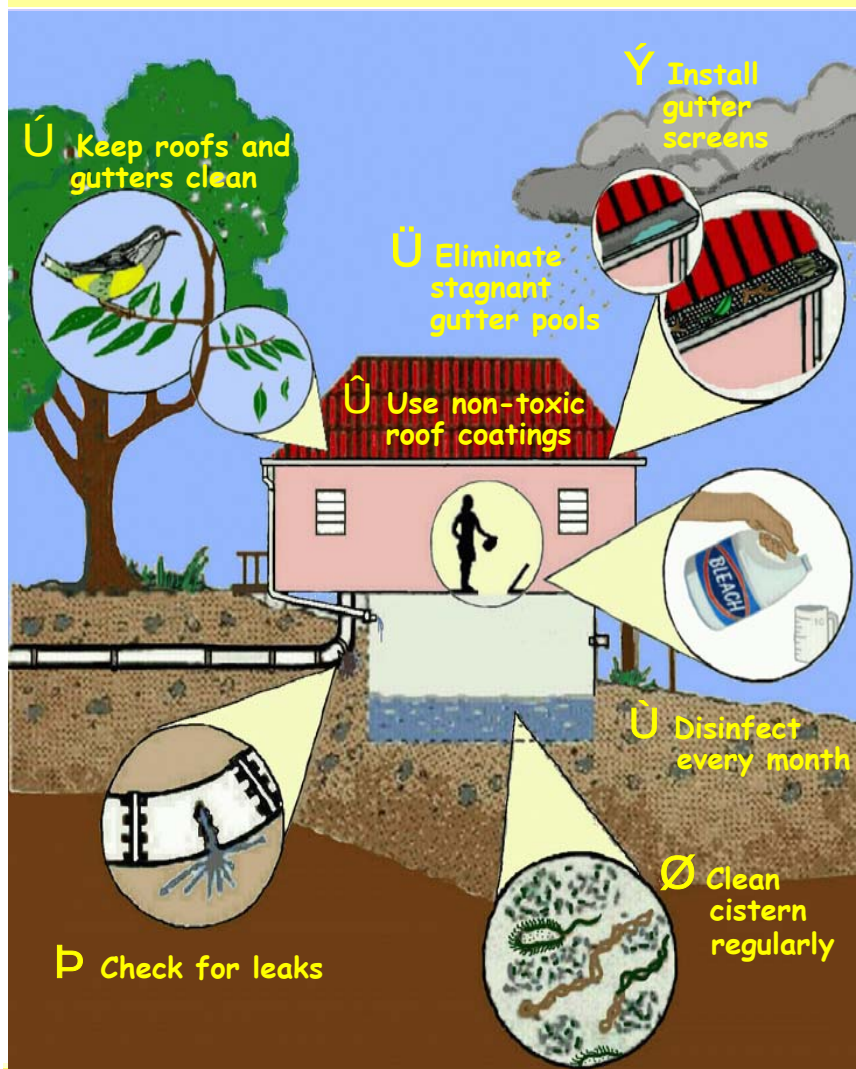


CISTERN HEALTH TIPS



See back for more about tips **K**



University of the Virgin Islands
Cooperative Extension Service
692-4080 (St. Croix)
693-1080 (St. Thomas - St. John)

Funded by an EPA
Environmental
Education Grant



Printed on recycled paper



CISTERN HEALTH TIPS

Ø Clean cistern regularly. Empty and clean your cistern every 3 to 5 years. Cleaning removes sludge deposits and reduces contaminants like coliform bacteria from your drinking water.

U Disinfect every month. Treat cistern water with 5 fluid ounces of liquid chlorine bleach (with no added fragrance or dyes) per 1000 gallons of water monthly. To find out how many gallons of water are in your cistern, multiply the length by the width by the depth of the water by 7.5. If there are lots of leaves and other debris in your cistern, you need to clean your cistern. Otherwise, you need to install water filters that remove trihalomethane, a chemical formed by the reaction of chlorine with organic debris.

Number of gallons of water in cistern =

$$\text{cistern length} \times \text{width} \times \text{water depth} \times 7.5$$

U Keep roofs and gutters clean. Regularly clean rooftops, gutters and pipes leading to cistern to reduce bacterial contamination. Leaf litter and other organic debris are the major source of bacteria in cistern drinking water that may cause illness.

U Use non-toxic roof coatings. Many roof coatings, paints and collection materials contain toxic substances such as zinc, copper, lead, and plastic that can contaminate your cistern water. The National Sanitation Federation (NSF) authorizes the following products safe to use for roof and gutters: Weather Barrier 2000 Rain Coat, Flex PW 9162 EIP, Topcoat W.O.B. (*WOB = without biocides), Vulkem 450/451 PWC.

U Eliminate stagnant gutter pools. Standing water creates mosquito breeding areas, birdbaths and stagnant water that can harm the quality of water entering your cistern.

Y Install gutter screens. Screen all cistern openings (including the overflow pipe) to prevent animals, insects and debris from entering your cistern. Frequently remove any debris that collects on top of screens.

P Check for leaks. Cracks or leaks in your cistern can allow entry of pollutants from failing septic systems, leaking petroleum storage containers or other outside sources. Tree roots invading the cistern indicate cracks or leaks.