BASIC PLUMBING AND PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE TIPS

Diagnosing & Fixing Garbage Disposal Problems - Chapter 2

Nothing gets in the way of a clean kitchen more than a garbage disposal that’s not working well. Problems usually involve jams or clogs and occasionally leaks. According to the experts at Master Plumbing and Leak Detection, the best way to ensure solid service from your disposal is to run cold water as you dispose of garbage and for one minute afterward. Disposals vary, so consult your owner’s manual for specific operation guidelines.

Safety Tips
When dealing with your garbage disposal, please follow these safety tips:

- If dismantling the disposal or working on electrical connections, shut off power at the main disconnect.
- Never put your hand in the disposal. Use pliers or tongs to remove an object.
- Never pour a chemical drain cleaner into your disposal.
- Never put lass, metal or rubber in your disposal.
- Disposals vary, so consult your owner’s manual.

Helpful hints for common problems:

Jams
- If your disposal makes a loud whirling noise or stops, it has jammed. Turn it off and wait five minutes. Then firmly press the reset button on the bottom of the motor housing. (Machines without buttons reset automatically).
- Still not working? See if it’s designed to be un-jammed from below. It may have a small crank or socket for an Allen wrench to turn the flywheel. Or it may have a reversing switch. Lacking these, angle a broom handle against an impeller blade and work the blade back and forth until the jam dislodges. Then press the reset button.

Clogs
- To cure a clog, disassemble the trap and use a snake.

Leaks
- Water dripping from the disposal usually indicates one or more seals are worn and need to be replaced.

Troubleshooting Garbage Disposal Problems

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| The motor doesn’t turn on      | - If there’s no power, check the fuse box/circuit breaker. If the disposal is plugged into a wall outlet, check the outlet.  
|                               | - Could be a defective on/off switch. On continuous feed models, check the wall switch. On batch-feed models, check the stopper switch. 
|                               | - Check for a tripped overload protector switch. If the flywheel is jammed, free it. Then, push the reset button. 
|                               | - Could be a defective motor. In this case, the unit must be replaced. For professional service, schedule an estimate. |
The motor hums, but the unit does not grind.  
- Check for a jammed flywheel.  
- The motor bearings could be frozen. You’ll probably have to buy a new unit.

Your disposal continuously blows a fuse.  
- You may have too many appliances plugged into a circuit. Install a 15-amp circuit just for the disposal.

You’re disposal won’t stop.  
- Could be a defective on/off switch. For professional service, schedule an appointment with Master Plumbing and Leak Detection.

Your disposal drains slowly.  
- It may not be getting enough water. Run more cold water when using the disposal.  
- Could be a clogged drain. Don’t use harsh chemical agents. Flush with hot water to remove a grease clog, then remove the drainpipe and clear it.  
- If the disposal isn’t grinding finely enough, replace a dull shredder ring or any broken flyweights.

Your disposal makes an unusual amount of noise.  
- Check for metallic object in the unit. Inspect the unit and fish out the object with tongs or forceps.  
- Could be loose mounting screws. Tighten the mounting screws.  
- If the flyweight is broken, tighten the drain flanges or replace the drain gasket.  
- The motor could be defective. The unit must be replaced.

Your disposal is leaking.  
- If the sink connection is loose, tighten the flanges holding the gaskets or replace the gaskets.  
- Check for loose drain connections, then tighten the drain flanges or replace the drain gasket.  
- Finally, it could be a damaged housing gasket. Replace the gasket or schedule and appointment.

**Garbage disposal smells - what could this mean?**
Put ice cubes in the disposal (about 1/2 way), run the disposal, flush out with cold water. Next put 1/2 a lemon and grind it up.

For expert assistance with identifying and treating problems with your disposal, schedule an appointment with Master Plumbing and Leak Detection.

*Please note, the knowledge skill and experience level required to follow these tips varies. If you are in doubt as to your ability to properly and safely implement these suggestions, contact a professional. Every home, home appliance and system is different as are the problems that can affect them. Accordingly, the tips referenced above...*
are meant only as suggestions to be considered for the listed problems. Master Plumbing and Leak Detection cannot be responsible for any damages arising from any actions or inactions take pursuant to tips provided herein.