

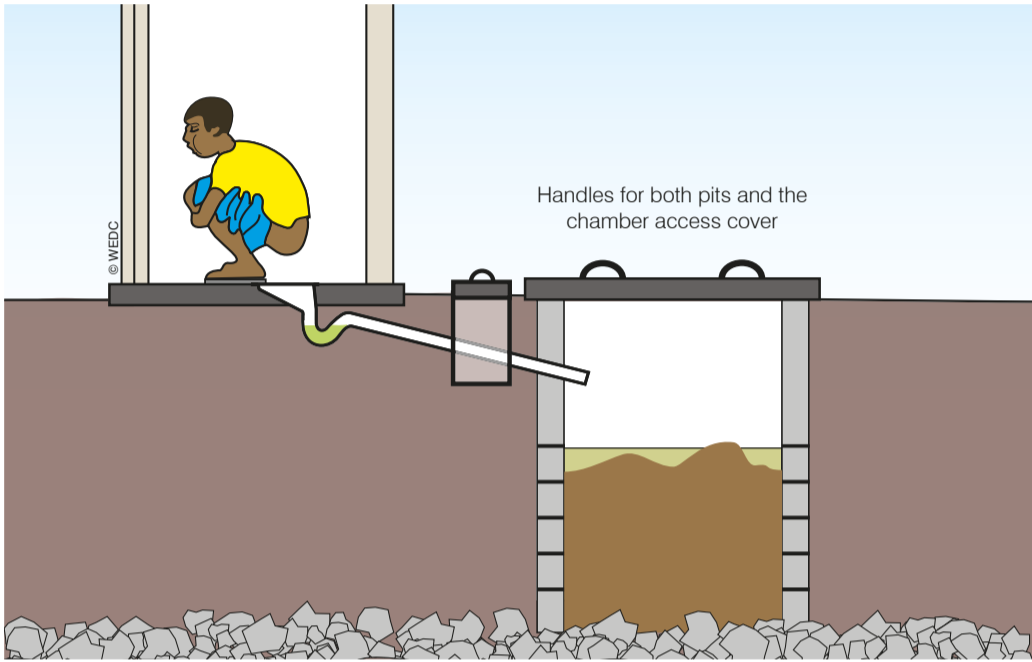
Twin-pit latrines 1

There will be times when it is not feasible to dig a deep pit. For example, when:

- the water table is very close to the surface;
- it is very difficult to dig more than 1.0 to 1.5 metres below water in a confined space;
- there is hard rock close to the surface; and
- the ground in which the pit is to be dug is so soft that it keeps collapsing before an adequate depth can be reached.

In such circumstances it is often easier to dig two shallow pits than one deep one.

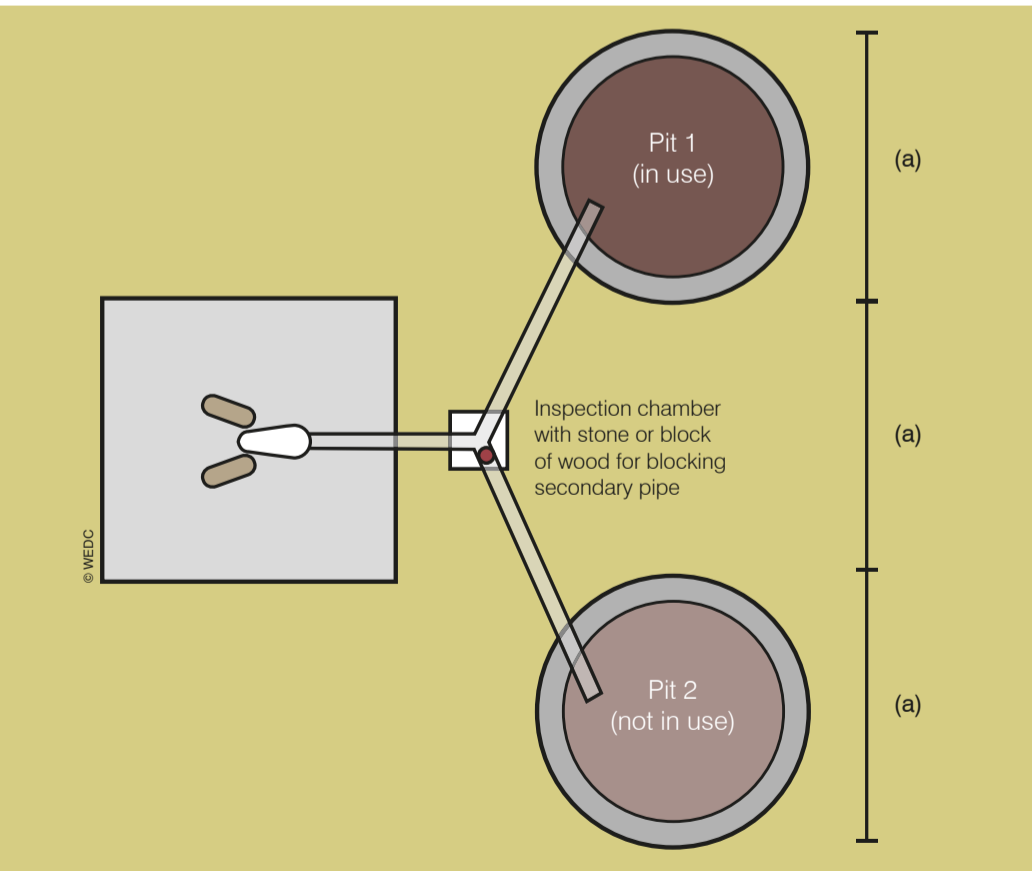
The pits are usually connected to the toilet by short pipes that converge at an inspection chamber. The inspection chamber must have an air-tight cover to prevent flies and mosquitoes entering and odours escaping.



Side view

Using a twin-pit latrine

- Before use, the inspection chamber is opened and the outlet to one of the pits is blocked with a large stone or a block of wood. This forces all wastes from the toilet to pass into only one of the pits.
- The first pit fills after about two years. The inspection chamber is reopened and the stone or wooden block is moved to cover the pipe leading to the full pit. The inspection chamber is closed again and the latrine returned to use. Wastes will now collect in the second pit.
- When the second pit is full, the contents of the first pit will have been standing for at least two years and virtually all of the pathogenic organisms will have died. At this point, it will be safe to remove the pit cover slab and dig out the contents. By this time the pit contents will have broken down to leave an odourless material which can be safely spread on the ground to help improve the quality of soil.
- After the first pit has been emptied the cover is replaced, the blockage in the inspection chamber is moved again and the first pit reused.
- From then on, a pit is emptied every two years.



Top view

(Distance between pits (a) = width of one pit)

For additional information about twin pits refer to Poster 14.