

About Water Softeners

Q. How does water softening work?

A. Water softeners use a special type of inert resin that selectively removes dissolved positively charged particles, known as ions (in this case calcium and magnesium ions) from water in a process known as ion-exchange. For every ion of calcium that the resin removes, it adds an ion of sodium, or potassium if you use potassium salt. Since sodium or potassium does not form scale or deposits the way calcium hardness does, the water is then considered "soft".

Q. Is salt added to the water to make it soft?

A. No. Salt in of itself does not make the water soft. Salt used to recharge resin and removes additional calcium and magnesium and other "hardness minerals" from resin.

Q. Is all water hard?

A. No. Waters above 6 to 8 grains of calcium carbonate per gallon are considered "hard". If you are on a private well or spring, you should test your water. Not all city waters are hard. If you see white spots and scale on fixtures and appliances though, chances are the water is "hard".

Q. Doesn't my body need the calcium that it is in my water?

A. No. A balanced diet of calcium-rich foods such as vegetables, meat, soy or dairy products are better sources of calcium.

Q. Isn't all that salt a major health problem?

A. No. The sodium level in softened water depends on the hardness of the water and the amount of water one would consume. For instance, very hard water containing 20 grains/gallon (also expressed as 340 mg/liter) would add 340 mg of sodium for every liter (about a half a gallon) of water drank. One would have to drink over four gallons of water to exceed recommended daily sodium levels, and in many cases much more than that.

Q. Is softened water OK for drinking?

A. Yes and No. Many softened waters are fine for drinking, but it depends on the total dissolved solids and any additives such as chlorine, or contaminants such as nitrate or metals. Soft water removes calcium & hardness minerals only. In most of the areas we serve, the total dissolved solids are high enough that many of our clients use reverse-osmosis systems to purify the water at one tap for drinking and purified ice etc. They continue drinking the water occasionally from other areas of the house.

Q. Doesn't soft water corrode piping?

A. No, this has proven to be false. The confusion arises because many naturally soft waters are also low in pH (acidic) and are naturally corrosive. Softened water actually has a slightly higher pH than un-softened water. Calcium buildup can cause corrosion sites to develop in piping systems and soft water may actually help to prevent corrosion in some cases.

Q. Why is soft water slippery or slimy feeling in the shower?

A. In the water treatment business we call it "silky". Actually, hard water strips the natural oils from skin while soft water allows these oils to remain. If it seems like the soap won't come off, just rinse off & then towel dry... you will soon find that your skin is wonderfully soft & no soap residue remains. You can expect softer skin and clean, softer hair after switching to soft water.

Q. Can I adjust the softener so it is not "so soft"?

A. Yes. Most of our systems come with an optional mixing valve that allows one to blend in some hard water.

Q. Will I save on soap or laundry products by using soft water?

A. Yes! You can expect to dramatically reduce soap and detergent use, on some waters up to 80%. Commercial laundries and hotels know the benefits of soft water and widely use water softeners.