

# **HARD WATER INFORMATION AND ADVICE BOOKLET**

## **WHAT IS HARD WATER?**

Hard water is water that is rich in natural minerals like calcium, which is good for bones, and is perfectly safe to drink.

There is a scale of hardness that is used to describe water and it ranges from soft to very hard and is measured as milligrams of calcium per litre of water.

There are two basic types of hardness - temporary and permanent. Temporary hardness is affected by heating water, and this causes the minerals to come out of the water and deposit as white scale or form a sheen on hot liquids. Permanent hardness is where the minerals cannot be removed by boiling.

## **WHERE DOES HARD WATER COME FROM?**

Your water is probably hard if it comes from a source near limestone or chalk rocks or contains groundwater. If the water we supply to you comes from a borehole, which is groundwater, or is blended with borehole water, it is harder water than water from reservoirs and rivers. Using more than one source of water means our water resources are secure, and we're best prepared for the future.



## HOW CAN I TELL IF I HAVE HARD WATER?

We publish water quality reports on our website which show how hard your water may be. If you live in an area where we have blended the water, then you may see a water hardness range in the report as the hardness levels will vary as the blend varies. We blend the water at different times depending on how much water is being used in your area, to make sure there is enough. Because of this, you may notice a change to the taste or smell of your water or changes in limescale deposits.

You can use the 'your local area' section on our website to enter your postcode and get access to the water quality report for where you live or use the link [here](#).

## WHAT DOES WATER HARDNESS MEAN FOR ME?

You might notice a sheen on the surface of hot drinks. It isn't harmful, but we understand it can be a nuisance. By making tea in a teapot and avoiding reboiling water in the kettle, your tea should improve. It can also be difficult to form a lather when using soap.

You might notice that your kettle, irons, and other water heating appliances have a white scale build up. Scaling of heating elements shortens their lifespan and can make them less efficient so it's important to maintain them with over the counter descaling products or consider fitting water softening devices as advised in the manufacturer's instructions.

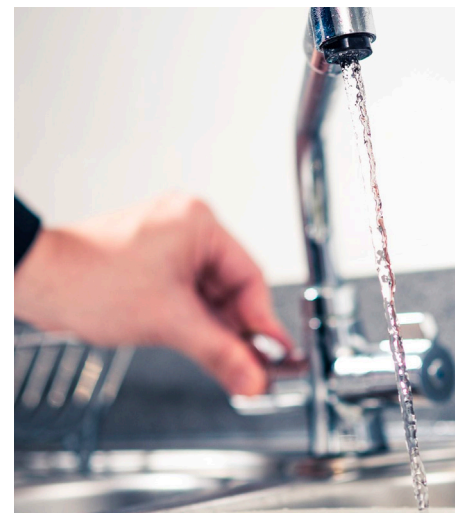
Limescale often deposits on shower screens and around the bath. By cleaning the surfaces in your bathroom, you will reduce the growth of black or pink mould or biofilm and by descaling your iron and kettle you will extend their lifespan.

Dishwasher and washing machine manufacturers provide instructions for use in hardwater areas. So knowing your water hardness and operating your machines according to the manufacturers guidelines, should help to prevent limescale build up in them. Some machines come with 'test strip' so you may want to use these to test your water.

When you install a new machine, you can check our website for your water hardness. Visit the 'your local area' section and enter your postcode to get access to the water quality report or click [here](#).

## **WHY DON'T WE ARTIFICIALLY SOFTEN THE WATER?**

There are a number of reasons why water companies don't change the natural hardness of the water during the treatment process. Large-scale softening of water supplies can lead to corrosion of metal pipes and is expensive, calcium rich water has health benefits, not all customers want softened water, and there are no standards set in the UK regulations for water hardness.



## **HOW CAN I SOFTEN MY WATER?**

If you are unsure if artificial softening is the right choice for you, we recommend contacting a reputable company who will be able to advise you on the most efficient and effective domestic installations. For independent water softener advice contact British Water on [020 7957 4554](tel:02079574554) or visit [www.britishwater.co.uk](http://www.britishwater.co.uk).

Many softening devices work by replacing the calcium and magnesium with sodium so we strongly advise that you keep your kitchen tap or the drinking water tap unsoftened. Sodium in the diet can have health implications so we recommend you refer to your GP for advice.

It is important to continue to use unsoftened mains fed water for drinking and cooking for infants and anyone on a sodium-restricted diet.

Other water softeners sold have a magnetic field causing crystals to cluster or change shape to stop them from sticking to heating elements. These are often fitted to protect boilers. Again, we recommend that you get advice when fitting these. There is advice available on the Drinking Water Inspectorate website.

Jug filters usually contain activated carbon and ion exchange resin beads. These can alter the temporary hardness of water so that filtered water is less likely to form a sheen on hot drinks.

## **DOES HARD WATER AFFECT MY SKIN CONDITION?**

Some people with skin conditions, such as eczema, have reported an improvement in their condition from using soft water for washing, but studies carried out by The University of Nottingham showed no objective difference in outcomes between the children whose homes were fitted with water softeners and those without. Visit the DWI website [here](#) for further information or speak to your GP.

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## **FURTHER INFORMATION:**

### **The Drinking Water Inspectorate**

<https://www.dwi.gov.uk/consumers/learn-more-about-your-water/#water-hardness>

