

Aquafacts No.13

Testing water in your home to see whether it is hard or soft.

This is a simple procedure to check whether your water softener is working correctly.

All you will need are 2 small plastic kitchen bowls (identical if possible) and a bar of soap. DO NOT use a cream soap or liquid soap as they may react similarly in hard and softened water. A traditional soap such as 'Simple' soap is ideal.

Procedure

Take one bowl and fill with 50mm (2") of hard water from an outside tap. Repeat with the second bowl using softened water from an inside tap.

Take the soap and plunge into the hard water and give it a good rub. Hard water in this area tends to lather poorly and few bubbles, if any, will be produced. After further rubbing the water will go milky and then a scum will form. This will get progressively worse and an unsightly sticky curd will cling to the sides of the bowl. If you place the palm of your hand in the bottom of the bowl you should not be able to see your hand as the water is so cloudy. This result is typical of the reaction between soap and the hardness minerals in water.

Remove the soap and repeat the exercise in the softened water. If your water is totally soft the reaction should be the complete opposite. By rubbing the soap an enormous amount of lather should be created quite quickly. The water should feel silky. A blanket of bubbles should appear across the surface of the water. If this is brushed aside the water underneath should be colourless. With some soaps there may be a little colouring from the contents of the soap but otherwise the water should remain clear regardless of how long rubbing continues. This shows the water is soft.

If there is any indication of the bubbles breaking up and the lather going flat then the water may not be completely soft. If the water goes milky to any degree, with few bubbles, then again the water may be showing signs of hardness.

Reacting to the results

If plenty of lather results from the test then there is

no need to take any further action - it is likely that your water softener is working fine. If signs of hardness are apparent, perhaps accompanied by the fact that the salt level in the softener seems to have been static for longer than usual, then the softener may not be working correctly.

At this stage we suggest that one of our engineers visits you to ascertain whether a fault has developed. Unless you have technical knowledge of water softeners we ask you not to interfere with the workings of the machine. This may invalidate your guarantee (if applicable).

Please contact us on the telephone number below and we will arrange for one of our engineers to visit at the earliest opportunity.

Leave the softener operating as usual. This will enable our engineer, when he calls, to check the softener under normal operating conditions. This will assist in diagnosis.

If you have any queries on the above or require help please contact us for further assistance.