

Aquafacts No. 7

Hints and tips for the first time user of softened water

The first few days

Your water softener will start softening the water as soon as it is installed and commissioned. Taps connected directly to the softened water supply will give lovely softened water immediately. It will take a while for the newly refined water to fill your storage tank in the loft (if you have one) and work its way through your hot water system. You should have partially softened hot water in one to three days and totally softened hot water, throughout your house, within three to seven days. If you have a direct mains fed water system softened water will be 'on tap' everywhere within a matter of hours. *Salt consumption may be high initially. It will reduce as the brine mix settles down, in the cabinet, within the first week.*

Softened water in the bathroom

Softened water uses less soap, shampoo and shaving cream. If you are not using them already revert to the more traditional soaps etc. They will be kinder on the skin and hair. Avoid using cheap bottles of bubble bath and liquid soap. Most are detergent derivatives which can react badly in softened water creating an oily film. Shaving in softened water is a real pleasure and blades will last longer. If you use an electric razor you are missing out on getting a really close and comfortable shave.

Initially be careful in the bath. It may feel slippery. You will only use the minimum of soap which will give you a silky feel even after you have dried yourself. No scum means no dryness. When it comes to cleaning the bath there is another surprise - no residues, so all the water slips away down the drain leaving little to wipe clean.

Softened water in the washing machine

As has already been stated softened water dramatically reduces soap consumption and there is no better place to highlight this fact than in the washing machine. Both powder and liquid usage can be cut in half, saving upward of 50%. We suggest you experiment until the right results are obtained. Many customers change from heavy-weight powders (such as Persil) to lightweight powders (for example Fairy) as some of the ingredients designed to tackle water hardness are not effective in softened water. You may also not need to use a fabric conditioner. Try washing without it to see whether it makes any difference to the softness or use half the recommended amount. One of the advantages, of a conditioner, is that it will reduce 'cling' when ironing.

Washing up with softened water

You will only need to add half the amount of detergent than you previously used. In softened water it is normal if you find the amount of bubbles less. This does not effect the cleaning ability of the detergent. You will find sinks remain cleaner and the whole wash will be easier to handle. Most items, including glassware, will dry on the drainer without a mark or stain. Cheap detergents do not generally work well in softened water and can create an unpleasant greasy film.

Softened water in the dishwasher

It is possible to reduce substantially the amount of dish washing liquid / powder used in the dishwasher and gain an improved quality of wash. Remember however, ***it is not now necessary to put salt in the dishwasher.*** This could actually prove detrimental. Now that all water is softened the additional salt would increase the sodium level, in the machine, excessively. Combined with the alkalinity of the cleaning agent the water would become very aggressive. This could cause etching problems on fine crockery and glassware. It is recommended that delicate items are always washed by hand.

Softened water with tea and coffee

Although you may not wish to use softened water for drinking (see Aquafact sheet 6) many softener owners prefer it to hard water. Hard water masks flavours whereas softened water has the tendency to enhance tastes. Tea and coffee, in particular, benefit from softened water. Not only do they taste better but less tea and coffee is required to obtain the same strength of 'brew'. Cordials and other beverages, such as hot chocolate, can also improve using softened water.

Softened water will descale kettles

If you make tea and coffee with softened water you will find the kettle will descale itself in about six weeks. After all the scale has dissolved away the inside of the kettle may turn brown or black over a period of time. This is quite normal and is not detrimental in any way.

Garden watering and softened water

Softened water is not normally satisfactory for watering the garden which is why the outside tap is, wherever possible, left plumbed directly to the incoming main. The same applies for indoor plants. Some varieties will tolerate softened water but naturally soft rain water is by far the best alternative.

Softened water and the aquarium

Most tropical and marine fish require special water conditions and softened water may not be satisfactory. It is advisable to seek the advice of your local aquaria stockist.

Softened water and car washing

Car washing can be a chore. Softened water makes it easier. Less drying marks are created and finishing with a leather is not essential.

The descaling action of softened water

Softened water will *completely* descale pipes, hot water cylinders and appliances. The electric kettle will take about six weeks to become clean. Your water system will take longer depending on the build up of scale. A really bad situation could take several years before it became totally clear of scale. As scale is porous the cleaning action of softened water will *not* in any way cause leaks in a water system. The removal process is actually quite gentle. Water quality meanwhile is not impaired. Where scaling is particularly bad a definite improvement in heating efficiency will be noted in time. Appliances, such as dishwashers and washing machines, will also operate more effectively.

The action of softened water on scaled fixtures and fittings

Initially unsightly scale can be removed by soaking overnight with a rag soaked in vinegar or by using a proprietary cleaner. More than one attempt may be necessary. Care must be taken with plastics and acrylic. It may be best to leave softened water to act on the stains to naturally remove them. This will take time but often less damage results. This is particularly true of gold plated fittings. Even the most stubborn scale will eventually dissolve away and it has been known to see the luster returning to sinks and baths within just a few months.

Testing to see whether the water is soft

If you are unsure that the water is soft it is very easy to check. Take two identical bowls and fill one from the outside tap (which should be hard water) and one from a tap which should be giving softened water. Use an ordinary bar of soap (such as Simple soap) and rub in the hard water. You should immediately see the water going cloudy and within a short time a scum form. Eventually the water will prevent you seeing your hand resting on the bottom of the bowl. Remove the soap to the second bowl and repeat the exercise. You should obtain an immediate lather with little effort. There should be no

residue whatsoever and the water should remain almost totally clear. If there is any sign of cloudiness, or a film begins to form (curd), then the water is *not* soft and it may be necessary to seek our advice (see telephone number below).

Obtaining salt for your water softener

You may think all salt is the same. Unfortunately it is not and there are big differences in quality. There is tablet, granular and block salt. Make sure you buy the salt designed to work in your machine and beware of salt in unfamiliar packs at cheap prices. We offer a local salt delivery service and you will always be guaranteed that it will be the right type and quality.

Caring for your water softener

Most water softeners are very robust appliances and should give many, many years of satisfactory service. The cabinet of your softener may require a clean from time to time and all that is required is a wipe over with a damp cloth. If there is a malfunction do not attempt to look into the workings of the machine, unless you are technically au fait with softeners. They are more complex than they look and you may do more harm than good. Always telephone us if you have a query. Water softener model type will determine when a service is required.

Queries about softened water

If you have any doubts about the above, or queries on the information or specification of your water softener, please refer to your guarantee and / or contact us directly.

IMPORTANT NOTE about time clock water softeners

If you have a time clock controlled water softener we strongly advise you to turn it off if you are away, from home, for any length of time. If not it will regenerate even when water is not being used and use excess amounts of salt. The water could become very salty. The softener timer will need to reset when you get back.

The following informational Aquafact sheets are available on request:

1. Getting to know Aqua-Nouveau.
2. Reverse Osmosis drinking water systems.
3. Improving drinking water and the products available.
4. Drinking water system comparison chart.
5. Is installing a water softener really worthwhile.
6. Softened water and health.
7. Hints and tips for the first time user of softened water.

The above are available direct from the company or via the Aqua- Nouveau web site at: www.aqua-nouveau.co.uk

T: 01256 844044
For assistance and information

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CORPORATE MEMBER

Publication 16 ©2008