

Is hard water bad? Do I need a water softener?

Hard water is not "bad" but hard water may not be your preference. Hard water is caused by the existence of Calcium or Magnesium in water that causes white scaly water spots. These spots show up on your glassware, car, and windows after they are cleaned and left to air dry with water droplets on the surface. Some people prefer hard water since soft water can feel slimy to some people when they are trying to rinse soap off in the shower. Others like soft water because it does eliminate some water spotting on things like glassware and your car. Hard water can be "softened" by using a water softener. Water softeners belong to a category of filters known as ion-exchange. This means they take the hard mineral ions such as calcium and magnesium and substitute "soft" ions such as sodium or potassium. Water softeners change water chemistry, typically lowering the pH, causing the water to be more corrosive which can potentially damage any copper or iron pipe in your house. Individuals that need to be careful of sodium intake for dietary reasons should be very careful in regard to softened water as it often contains high levels of sodium. Softeners also require regular addition of Sodium Chloride or Potassium Chloride which is used by the filter to regenerate the ion-exchange filter media inside. This salt adds a regular cost component to as well as a potential environmental problem associated with the disposal of filter backwash water which can be salty.