

UNDERSTANDING

Water Softeners

You can be assured that the Walnut Valley Water District is firmly committed to providing its consumers with safe drinking water that meets or exceeds all state and federal water quality standards. Although there is no need to purchase a treatment device due to health concerns, there are some consumers who prefer to treat their water for aesthetic reasons or they desire to soften the water to reduce mineral formation on plumbing fixtures.

Prior to purchasing a water softening system it is important to understand how a water softener works. Water is considered "hard" if it contains a significant amount of calcium or magnesium. Water softeners swap calcium and magnesium ions with sodium ions as the water passes through a bed of small plastic beads covered with sodium ions. When all of the sodium ions have been spent, it is necessary to regenerate the beads by soaking them in a stream of sodium ions. The remaining brine solution plus all of the calcium and magnesium is then discharged into a drainpipe leading to a water reclamation plant. This is a problem because the additional salts are not removed during the reclamation process.

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Environmentally conscious consumers may want to choose the option of contracting with a water softening service that exchanges spent cartridges and removes them for disposal instead of allowing the solution to be discharged into the sewer system.

Keep in mind that softer water has both good and bad features. Softer water will generally give a softer feel to hair and skin, will reduce the amount of shampoo, dish soap, or laundry detergent required to do the job, and in addition will reduce the mineral deposits on pipes, glasses, and cars. However, softer water can be more corrosive to your plumbing and the additional sodium may be a concern for people on a low-sodium diet. Also, some water softeners waste water by regenerating after a fixed period of time even though there are a significant number of sodium ions remaining on the plastic beads. Therefore, if you are thinking of purchasing a water softening device, consider a water softener that measures how much water has been used so it can regenerate when most or all of the sodium ions have been spent.



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