WATER SOFTENERS & THE ENVIRONMENT

FOR MORE INFORMATION

West Metro Water Alliance
westmetrowateralliance.org/water-softeners

Minnesota Department of Health
healthstate.mn.us

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
pca.state.mn.us/water/chloride-salts

Water softeners add salt to the water. All the salt we use goes into our lakes and streams. It takes only one teaspoon of salt to permanently pollute five gallons of water, making it too salty for many freshwater organisms.

Do I Really Need a Water Softener?

It depends!

Most of the groundwater in the Twin Cities is hard, meaning it has a high mineral content. Some cities pre-soften drinking water, while other cities leave water softening up to individual property owners.

If you live in a community that softens the drinking water, the water is already optimally softened so you do not need a water softener.

Cities in Hennepin County that soften drinking water:

- Minneapolis
- Golden Valley
- Bloomington
- New Hope
- Crystal
- Robbinsdale*
- Eden Prairie
- Tonka Bay
- Excelsior
- Saint Paul**

**Starting fall 2022*
***Not in Hennepin County*

If you live in Hennepin County and don't see your city on the list, chances are your water is not pre-softened. There is no requirement to soften your water, but you may wish to use a water softener to reduce your water's hardness. Contact your city to get information about the specific hardness of your water.

Have a private well? Use a test kit to test your water's hardness.

FACTS ABOUT WATER SOFTENERS

- Water softeners are used to reduce the hardness of water. This helps prevents mineral deposits on pipes, appliances, and glassware.
- Most softeners are ion-exchange systems. Hardness ions (calcium and magnesium) are exchanged for salt (sodium or potassium chlorides).

What Can I Do?

Determine if you really need one. If your water's hardness is less than **7 grains per gallon** (120 mg/L), you probably don't need a water softener. Contact your city for hardness information or use a test kit.

Reduce the salt. Only soften water that needs it. Don't soften water to outside spigots or cold water taps. Only soften to 5 grains per gallon — over-softening wastes salt and can corrode pipes. Check your unit's settings and adjust if they're too high.

Adjust the timer. If you have a timer-based softener, hire a professional to have it optimized or consider upgrading to a more efficient system.

Upgrade to a high-efficiency softener. If you're buying or upgrading a softener, look for one that has high salt-efficiency and is demand-initiated. You may pay a little more upfront, but you'll save on salt.

Filter out the iron. If you have a problem with iron, consider using an iron filter.

Conserve water. Reducing your overall water use has environmental and economic benefits.

WMWA
West Metro Water Alliance