

# YOUR ONE-STOP-SHOP TO WATER SOFTENER KNOW-HOW



Have you ever noticed having crusty white marks around your taps and cloudy drinking water? What about misted glasses, streaky plates, stained utensils and dull cutlery after it's been through the dishwasher? Or blocked showerheads, tide lines around your bath and basin, low water flow from your hot tap because the pipe is scaled up, or no soap lather when you wash? Or dull, dingy and stiff clothes even after you've washed them?

It's a bleak outlook! If this sounds like your home, whether you know it or not, the likelihood is you're living in a hard water area and, without intervention, you're going to experience the same problems for years to come.

You might think spending money on cleaning products that promise to remove limescale is all you can do to solve the issue, but that's not the case. Having a water softener fitted will take

away the problem all together, by removing the minerals that cause limescale before they ever make contact with your taps and pipes, meaning limescale will never leave its mark again.

The good news for you is that your plumber is showing you this information because they can see the effect that hard water is having on your home, and they know how to fit a water softener to tackle the problem, from today.

If you're still unsure, here are some of the questions that many homeowners ask, together with answers from BEAMA approved manufacturers, so you can be confident in taking the next steps to having one installed...

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HARD AND SOFT WATER?

Rainwater is naturally soft, but as it makes its way through the ground and into our waterways, it picks up minerals such as calcium and magnesium – and it's these two minerals that are responsible for creating hard water. Whether you have hard water or not depends on how water is collected and supplied to your home. Around 40% of the UK's homes are in soft water areas, but the majority (60%) are in hard water areas, causing a problem for over 15 million homes.

## HOW DOES HARD WATER AFFECT ME AND MY HOME?

Hard water has a detrimental effect on everything it comes into contact with. At worst it blocks up hot water pipes and leaves limescale on white goods, meaning you need to replace them more frequently. Day-to-day, what you can see inside your kettle gives you a good indication of what's happening around your home in less easy to see places. The biggest impact is usually on the amount of cleaning products purchased for the home each month – this not only becomes expensive, but has a knock-on effect on our environment.

## WHAT CAN I DO?

Ask your plumber about water softener units. They are fitted next to your home's stop cock, which is usually under your sink. Most units will last 10 years, with reports of some lasting up to 30 years. The only maintenance required is an occasional service to ensure it continues to work effectively and efficiently and to top up the salt as and when required, normally once a week as a guide, the same way you add this to your dishwasher.

## HOW BIG ARE WATER SOFTENERS?

They take up just about half of the cupboard space under your sink, so can be handily hidden from sight!

## HOW DO THEY WORK?

Inside a water softener unit, water passes through a container which houses thousands of tiny beads. These beads attract and retain the calcium and magnesium from the hard water, sending soft water out into your home for you to use. Every so often, these beads need cleaning. This is done automatically by the unit, which flushes a weak solution made up of salt and water through the container to wash the beads clean. The unit then automatically flushes this dirty water down the drain, leaving the beads clean and ready to begin another cycle.

## IF I MOVE HOUSE, CAN I TAKE IT WITH ME?

You can, but it will depend on many factors as to whether this is the best course of action. This will include whether your current model is suitable for your new home and what you have agreed with the new occupants of your old home. One thing you can be certain of is, if you've had a water softener in past, you'll be prepared to invest in one again if your new home is in a hard water area.

## WILL IT BE WORTH THE INVESTMENT?

With all the money you'll save on cleaning products (and time spent cleaning!), the water softener will pay for itself in just 3-4 years. It's also much more friendly to the environment. If you need more convincing, ask your plumber to show you one of our case studies.

If you think you could benefit from having a water softener installed in your home, why not take the first step and contact a reputable installer who will be able to tell you more. If you're still not sure whether you live in a hard water area, take a look at our guide on how to tell.

## ARE ALL WATER SOFTENERS THE SAME?

Absolutely not. To get the best from your softener, buy from a reputable company to ensure top quality and warranty. BEAMA recommended water softener manufacturers Monarch, BWT and Kinetico will all be more than happy to help you find the right product for your home.

## I'VE HEARD THERE ARE ELECTRIC AND NON-ELECTRIC WATER SOFTENERS – WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Once a day your water softener will 'flush' away all the minerals that have been captured by the system while it works its magic. The biggest and most obvious difference is a non-electric softener does all this without the use of electricity and initiates the regeneration process based on the volume of water that has passed through it. With a non-electric softener, you normally have two internal mini vessels. One is in service whilst the other one is on standby. When the vessel in service becomes exhausted it goes into a regeneration (self-cleaning mode) with soft water then being provided by the previous standby unit. When this self-cleaning process is finished, this vessel goes onto standby ready to take over from the current vessel providing soft water. This flip/flop operation continues automatically. Both electric and non electric models are controlled by an internal water meter to govern when the self-cleaning process (regeneration) takes place.

An electric softener has a much larger vessel/capacity, so the regeneration process is much less frequent and can be delayed until 2am, a time when little or no water is being used. An electric water softener offers greater flexibility in that it can be programmed to carry out the process at a time to suit you.

Non electric softeners are generally smaller and more compact, whereas electric softeners although very slightly bigger, offer higher flow rates for today's modern water systems. Both types of models have been designed to fit inside a kitchen unit.

There are benefits to using both types of product either electric or non electric. To find out what option is best for you our recommended manufactures can tell you more.