



Hypertension and Soft Water

Water Quality Answers

Is there a relationship between softened drinking water and hypertension?

The Water Quality Association believes that softened drinking water makes no significant contribution to hypertension. WQA's *Sodium in Perspective*, for example, explains that drinking water sodium contributes only a very minor (less than 10%) of dietary intakes. Sodium in drinking water from a water softener is not a significant human health concern. Recent evidence is changing the scientific thinking about the relationship between sodium and hypertension. New studies are showing that:

1. The amount of sodium in the diet is unrelated to the prevalence of hypertension in society or to its average blood pressure.
2. Intake of other minerals, like calcium and potassium, and the electrolyte balance they create bears at least as much relationship as sodium to whether a person is hypertensive, and
3. Sodium bicarbonate, which is the prevalent compound added by water softening, does not associate with hypertension as sodium chloride is alleged to do in some people.

This is why in January 1991 the U.S. Environmental Agency deleted sodium from their list of substances the Agency feels may require regulation some time in the future.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration defines 140 milligrams of sodium per serving of food as dietetically minimal or of "low sodium" content. Ion exchange softening of water with 70 grains per gallon (gpg) of total hardness will not add sodium above the "low sodium" drinking water limit