

Q. Can drinking “soft” water be harmful to your health?

A. Yes. Besides its unpleasant taste, softened water can be harmful if you have heart or kidney disease, or if you are on a sodium-restricted diet.

In the water softening process, calcium carbonate, a naturally occurring chemical compound that makes water “hard,” is exchanged for sodium chloride (salt).

According to a report in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, the sodium content of water can increase to as much as 100 milligrams per liter (about a quart) after softening.

If you have heart or kidney disease, or follow a low-sodium diet, consider having the water that you use for drinking and cooking tested.