

WATER SOFTENERS

Do water softeners help eczema sufferers?

Some people with eczema seem to find that their skin improves when they move to a soft water area or if they install a Water Softener. Hard water contains high levels of calcium and magnesium salts that have the potential to irritate the skin. However, the amount of people that this may affect is unknown.

There has been a lot of anecdotal evidence from people who have tried using water softeners that suggests that having their water softened has improved their eczema. More recently, a study in Nottingham found that eczema was slightly commoner in schoolchildren living in the hardest water areas when compared with the soft areas. It is difficult to say whether this was due to the hard water or if it is due to some other factor. If hard water is a factor in causing or worsening eczema, then this could be due a direct effect of irritation from the calcium and magnesium salts in the water. Or it could be due to the fact that having hard water results in people using larger amounts of soaps and detergents, which in turn can dry out and irritate the skin. Also, clothing bedding, towels, etc., washed in hard water may have residual soap scum, enzymes and other cleaning chemicals, which may irritate sufferer's skin.

So the answer to the question on whether water softeners improves eczema is "we still don't know for sure" at present. There may be something in it, but the current evidence is not strong enough to recommend it to eczema sufferers. A team of researchers at Nottingham are doing a pilot study right now to see if doing a large experiment on water softeners is worthwhile. In the meantime, if you are considering trying a Water Softener in your home, the following information may be helpful.

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