

What is Hard Water?



Hard water is a term used to describe water with a high dissolved mineral content of calcium and magnesium. In Tucson, our groundwater is naturally hard. The increasing hardness levels come primarily from mixing our area's hard groundwater with Central Arizona Project (CAP) water. As the percentage of CAP water increases, the hardness level will increase.

Is hard water safe to drink?

Yes, hard water is safe to drink and is not a health risk.

What does hard water mean to me?

The changing mineral levels in hard water can influence how water tastes, with mineral build up shortening appliance life and clogging pipes. Here are some tips to reduce the effects of hard water:

- **Calcium build-up on appliances** — Hard water causes calcium deposits to build up in evaporative coolers, hot water heaters, dishwashers, coffeemakers and washing machines.

TIP Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to maintain your appliances for hard water. Use laundry and cleaning products designed to minimize the effects for hard water, and use special filters to remove calcium from cooler water and coffeemakers.

- **Spotty and streaky dishes** — High calcium content causes spotting or streaking of dishes.

TIP Use white vinegar on dishes and glassware to reduce spotting. If dishes are cloudy coming out of the dishwasher, run an empty cycle with white vinegar in the soap dispenser to flush out calcium deposits. Use detergent made to use with hard water.

- **Clogged taps** — Hard water can clog showerheads and water tap aerators.

TIP Clean your shower head and aerators with white vinegar or a hard water-specific cleaning product. Vinegar can also remove a hard water ring in a toilet.

- **Difficulty 'soaping up'** — Hard water makes creating lather with soap and shampoo more difficult.

TIP Using more soap or using a shower gel will help clean effectively. There are shampoo products available that keep hard water minerals from building up on hair and scalp.

- **Inefficient home treatment systems** — Hard water does affect home treatment systems.

TIP Use a pool test kit to measure the water hardness range and regularly check and maintain your system according to equipment and manufacturer guidelines. Click or download **Navigating the Waters** (<http://cms3.tucsonaz.gov/files/water/docs/NavigatingWaters.pdf>) to understand the pros and cons of home treatment systems.