

wellcare[®] information for you about **Sodium**

What is Sodium?

Sodium is the sixth most abundant element on Earth and is widely distributed in soils, plants, water and foods. Most of the world has significant deposits of sodium-containing minerals, most notably sodium chloride (salt).

Sodium dissolves easily in water and is always present at some level. If you treat your well water for hardness, that process usually involves sodium and can lead to higher levels of sodium in the water. (Some water softeners use potassium and are not a threat). Other sources of sodium are natural occurrences and runoff of road salts from highways.

What are the Health Effects of Sodium?

Sodium is a normal component of the body and adequate levels of sodium are required for good health. Food is the main source of daily human exposure to sodium. Less than one percent of daily intake of sodium comes from water.

But sodium in drinking water may be an issue for someone with heart disease, hypertension, kidney disease, circulatory illness or on a sodium-controlled diet.

About 42 million adults, 20 percent of the population, have persistent high blood pressure (hypertension). About half of those with high blood pressure are sensitive to sodium and can reduce blood pressure by reducing sodium.

The American Heart Association and National Academy of Sciences recommend sodium levels between 500 and 2,400 milligrams (mg) per day. However, sodium at less than 1,800 mg is believed to be healthier. Unfortunately, the average daily intake of sodium for an adult is 5,600 mg per day.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) does not mandate a maximum level of sodium permitted in public water supplies. However, the agency has released a Drinking Water Advisory that recommends sodium levels not exceed 20 parts per million.

How Do I Test for Sodium?

If you have a water softening treatment system that uses sodium and anyone in the household is at high risk of hypertension, heart disease or other circulatory ailments, you might wish to test for sodium in your drinking water. Your local or state health department or water well professional can refer you to state-certified laboratories that can test for sodium. Follow the test sample directions closely, particularly if you are testing treated water.

What Is the Treatment for Sodium?

First, figure out the source of the elevated sodium levels. If water softening equipment is the problem, simply avoid drinking the softened water. Consider installing a separate bypass faucet or dedicating the cold water faucet in the kitchen to water drawn directly from the well and untreated with softeners.

Another option is to treat the water with a reverse osmosis or distillation system. This equipment can remove sodium added by water softening or from other sources.

For more information about Sodium and other drinking water contaminants

EPA Office of Ground Water & Drinking Water, *Drinking Water Advisory: Sodium*:
www.epa.gov/safewater/ccl/pdf/hedoc-sodium-final.pdf

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service,
Sodium in Drinking Water: www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/H20QL2/MF1094.PDF.

University of Minnesota Extension Service, Water Resources Center:
www.extension.umn.edu/water/sodium.html

For more information on your drinking water

The following sites provide up-to-date information on efforts to protect drinking water supplies and steps you can take as a private well owner:

Water Quality Association www.wqa.org
NSF International www.nsf.org

For more information about wells and other wellcare® publications

wellcare® is a program of the **Water Systems Council (WSC)**. WSC is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the wider use of wells as modern and affordable safe drinking water systems and to protecting ground water resources nationwide. Well owners and others with questions about wells or well water can now call the **wellcare®** hotline at **888-395-1033** or visit www.watersystemscouncil.org



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