

Testing for Excess Caustic

It is important to test your soap for an excess of caustic. Caustic testing is commonly referred to as “Hot” testing. Soap that is caustic hot can not only be harsh to the skin but dangerous if the soap is extremely caustic. There are many stories of the harshness of Grannies old time soap -- this harshness can be eliminated using the following caustic tests. All soaps including those made using the instructions contained in this book should be tested for an excess of caustic.

NEVER USER CAUSTIC SOAP!

If the soap has been cold processed you must wait until after the curing period to test the pH of the soap. Cold processed soap will test positive for caustic during the curing phase.

Hot processed soap is cooked until neutral and testing negative for caustic is the indication that you can stop cooking hot processed soap.

Finished soap should have a pH from 9 to 10.5.

If the pH is over 10.5, you need to adjust the soap. You can do this by keeping the temperature at least 180°F and add melted fatty acids or whole oils. Start by adding 1 to 2 percent of the actual soap in fatty acid or oil and mix well. The ingredients will saponify fairly quickly. Cook for an additional 15 minutes and check pH again.

If the pH is 8.5 or less, you may have an excess of superfatting. This can be adjusted by adding 1 to 2 percent of the total lye to the soap. To do this, dissolve the lye into 2 parts water and add this to the soap mixing well. Cook for an additional 15 minutes and check pH again.

The following are four basic ways to test your soap for an excess of caustic.

The Battery Test

The basic hot test is a “battery” test. This test is done by simply touching the soap to your tongue. If you get a bite similar to the bite you receive from a 9 volt batter then the soap is caustic hot. This is a good quick test and is actually fairly accurate in testing for caustic soap.

This test can be performed at any time in the soap making process. If the soap remains caustic hot after CP soap has been cured or after the cook time in HP soap it should be corrected, re-batched or discarded.