

## Spa and hot tub care

For the new spa owner, or for a person who is new to spa maintenance, here are some tips to maintain water chemistry and spa equipment, along with some regular maintenance and cleaning duties to keep your spa water clean and ready to use!

### KEEP UP WITH WATER CHEMISTRY

Ensure you test the water and make small adjustments to pH, alkalinity, calcium hardness and sanitizer levels regularly. This means testing the spa water 2-4 times per week and making adjustments as needed to keep your levels in the proper ranges. Keeping a log is a good idea to keep track of your test results and makes notes on adjustments.

Tap water is pretty good spa water in most areas. But in some areas (and you know where you are), you can run into issues of soft or hard water, high alkalinity, pH imbalance, or high levels of chloramines, metals and minerals. You can test your tap water with your test kit, or when testing after a drain and refill, you can measure the suitability of your tap water as spa water. Using a spa pre-filter removes metals, odours and the finest silt from your spa fill water.

### CLEAN THE SPA FILTER

The spa filter can be under the skimmer basket accessed from inside the spa, or it can be a small tank that is opened up underneath the spa. You'll need to locate it first in order to clean or replace the filter during your spa care routine. If underneath the spa, you may have a valve that can be shut to prevent water from rushing out when you open the filter. Loosening a large nut or just turning the filter body counter clockwise is the usual method to access the filter cartridge. Some water spillage is inevitable when opening it up, but if you are careful it can be very little.

If your spa filter has a pressure gauge attached to it, the cartridge needs cleaned when the pressure rises 8-10 PSI higher than the freshly cleaned pressure reading, or when flow is noticeably reduced. If you have no gauge on your filter, you should clean the filter on a regular schedule. I clean my own filter cartridge every 4-8 weeks, depending on how often I use the spa. If my hot tub is being used a few times per week, I'll clean the filter every four weeks, or monthly.

Replace your spa filter every 1-2 years, again depending on usage. Another way to do it is to change it every 10-15 cleanings, because that's what really breaks down a cartridge. Every time it's cleaned, fibres loosen up and it loses a little bit of its dirt trapping ability. Keep track of your spa filter's age and/or cleaning cycles, because at some point soon its going to need replacement.

### CLEAN THE SPA

Speaking of regular spa care, a full cleaning of the waterline and surfaces can be done when the spa is drained, which should happen every 2-4 months. Just be sure not to use any old household cleaner or soap. If you are going to use any chemical on your spa surfaces, use something like our Spa Cleaner to keep out phosphates, nitrates and who knows what else.

Vacuuming the spa can be accomplished with small vacuums that are either battery powered or garden hose powered. There are also spa vacs that connect to your vacuum hose for fast removal of even large leaves.

Floating debris can be removed with a skimmer net. If you left the cover off during a windstorm and the spa is full of leaves, a skimmer net can also be used to scoop up the larger leaves under the water.

### AIR-OUT THE SPA COVER

One of the most important things you can do to increase the longevity of your spa cover is to remove it at least twice per week. Use a spa cover lifter to completely remove it, or if you don't have a spa cover lift, gently place it off the spa. Give your cover a few hours to breathe and shake off some of the constant heat and moisture.

This is also a good time to add chemicals or shock the spa if you aren't using it at the time.

Another good spa maintenance practice is cleaning and conditioning your vinyl spa cover. Especially if your spa cover is outside, spa cover cleaner can quickly remove airborne oils, dirt, tree sap and pollen while cover conditioner will replenish the vinyl plasticizers that keep your vinyl spa cover soft, strong and looking great.

### ADD FILL WATER

This spa care tip is so often forgotten. However, if the skimmer starts to suck air, it could possibly damage the pump. The water level should be in the middle of the skimmer intake or a little higher. You don't want it too high, and you never want to overflow the spa, so keep a close eye on the water level while filling.

Keep a garden hose nearby. If your garden hose is too far away, set up a sub-spigot by running a hose from a splitter on your current spigot, to a spigot that is mounted on a stake. Then you always have a hose right next to the spa for filling or topping off the hot tub water level.

To take care of 95% of spa care tasks, just remember these five easy tips:

- Test and adjust your spa 2-4 times per week.
- Clean the spa filter every 4-8 weeks and replace every 1-2 years.
- Keep the spa clean; drain and refill every 2-4 months.
- Air-out the spa cover twice per week.
- Add water as needed to keep it full.