

Spa Owners Manual

Water Balance

Water balance in a spa is a little different than a swimming pool. There is a fraction of the amount of water and it's heated much higher than a pool. Still there are a lot of similarities. The three keys to healthy water are the same...keep your chemicals in balance, filtration is vital and you can't skip cleaning. But take heart...spa maintenance is much easier and takes less time!

Don't be confused or intimidated! Water chemistry is easy. The term "balance" refers to keeping a few key vital signs in a particular range. The "vitals" to look at weekly are alkalinity, pH and sanitizer levels. Just test your water once a week with a reliable test kit and keep those key readings in the proper range.

Start with alkalinity. This is the heart of your spa chemistry and anchors all the chemicals. Test for alkalinity first. It's measured in "parts per million" and your goal is to keep it between 80 and 120 ppm.

To raise it: Use sodium bicarbonate

To lower it: Use sodium bisulfate (dry acid)

Next, check your pH. This is the power of hydrogen and determines how comfortable swimmers are in the water. PH is measured on a scale of 0-14. A reading of 7.0 is neutral. Your target range is 7.4 to 7.6.

To raise it: Use sodium carbonate

To lower it: Use sodium bisulfate (dry acid)

Finally, check your sanitizer. Sanitizers control the growth of bacteria and algae. Keep enough in the spa's water and you'll have fewer problems. The most common sanitizers are chlorine and bromine and are measured in "parts per million." Your target range is 3.0 to 5.0 ppm.

To raise it: Add more chlorine

To lower it: Let it fall on its own

Keep these chemicals in their proper range and you'll avoid most water problems. Experts recommend testing other chemicals at least once per quarter. Take a water sample into your spa supply retailer and let them test it for stabilization, calcium (hardness) and total dissolved solids. A professional retailer can help you keep these areas in balance as well.

Expert tip: Don't chase the "bounce." Make adjustments slowly and give them a few days to take effect. Chemicals have an impact on each other and you need to give them some time to "settle."

Filter Maintenance

Keep your water moving! Good circulation and filtration is the second key to clear water. To remove dirt and other particles from the water, your spa uses a filter system to trap it as the water passes through. Keep your filter clean so that it has a better chance to catch more particles.

Your spa operates with cartridges in the filter system. As the spa's water passes through, mesh material in the cartridges traps the waste material. Remove the cartridges periodically and hose them off to remove the waste.

Here are some tips:

- Clean the cartridges every month
- Always turn the equipment off before cleaning the filters.
- Remember to close the slice valves.
- Now, remove the cartridges.
- Spray them with a filter cleaner every three or four months.
- Hose them off to remove collected debris.
- Reinstall the cartridges, open slice valves and turn on the equipment.

Expert tip: Purchase an extra cartridge element to save time and allow the filter to dry between cleanings.

Spa cartridge elements should be replaced once per year.

Run the spa filter twice per day for two hours at a time. That will keep your water clear and ready for you at the end of a hard day!

The Pump

This piece of equipment is what drives the water through your spa's filtration system.

Fortunately, it doesn't require much maintenance by the spa owner. Just make sure the pump's strainer basket is free of debris and that the lid is tightly secured. A leaky pump lid can allow air into your system.

Check the O-ring periodically and make sure it's properly lubricated so that it makes a tight seal.

Also, look for leaks around the pump just to make sure it's working properly.

Heater

Heaters are a vital part of the spa's water system. Water at the normal temperature enters the unit and is heated by flames fueled by propane or natural gas. Warmer water exits the unit and enters the spa.

Most heaters operate with a pilot or electronic ignition.

Pilot lights are lit continuously and may require re-lighting from time to time. Lighting the pilot on a spa system is similar to that of a hot water heater. Just open the door on the front of the heater. Turn the gas valve to the pilot position. Push down the knob and the igniter button. Hold the gas valve down for a few seconds to make sure it stays lit.

Electronic ignition heaters use electricity to start the heater and contain no pilot. When you turn the heater on, a spark lights the heater.

A temperature of 100 to 102 degrees is recommended.

Expert tip: Maintain spa water at 95 degrees, then heat it the additional five to seven degrees when you plan to use it. Maintaining the temperature of the spa water will actually save you money in the long run and allow you to heat the spa to the desired temperature much more quickly.

Note: Proper water balance helps extend the life of your heater. Corrosive water will cause problems for the copper heat exchanger. Make sure your water is always balanced!

Cleaning The Spa

You'll enjoy your spa more if you keep it clean. Cleaning a spa is a snap and requires only about 10 minutes each week.

Tools of the trade include a good nylon brush and a spa vacuum.

Clean the Surface of the Spa

Use a mixture of bleach and water and wipe the entire surface area. Use one cup of bleach to one bucket of water. Rinse the surface with clean water.

Empty The Baskets

Turn off the pump. Simply remove and empty the baskets in the skimmer and pump. Replace the baskets, make sure the pump lid is secured tightly and turn on the pump.

Vacuum The Spa

A spa vacuum attached to a garden hose will lift that sand or debris right out of the bottom of your spa. It takes only a few moments and keeps your spa looking great.

Drain the Spa

It is recommended to drain and replace your spa water every three to four months. It's easy to do.

All portable spas are gravity drained. Don't drain the water onto your lawn or plants unless all the sanitizer has dissipated from the spa water. (Leaving the spa cover off and exposing the water to direct sunlight will dissipate the sanitizer very quickly).

Once the spa is drained, use the same procedure as "Clean the Surface of the Spa" to wipe down the entire spa surface.