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Your Comprehensive Hot Tub Maintenance Guide



When considering hot tub ownership, you may have concerns about the work that goes into spa maintenance. And rightfully so.

If your aim is to add a source of relaxation, rejuvenation, and peace into your life, the last thing you need is a product that involves a lot of labor in order to use it.

While maintaining a hot tub can seem like a daunting task, most hot tub owners will be the first to tell you it's really not as hard as they thought it would be. Assuming you purchase a high quality spa and follow a simple spa care schedule, the myth is debunked and hot tub maintenance becomes as routine as washing your car.

In this comprehensive guide to hot tub maintenance, we'll cover everything you need to know about maintaining a hot tub. First, we'll look at product features affecting maintenance that can save you time and money, then we'll cover water care basics followed by step-by-step spa care and maintenance best practices. to for some relaxation, there's something here for everyone.



HOT TUB OZONE SYSTEMS

These days, quality hot tub manufacturers typically build several maintenance-reducing features into their products. The first and perhaps most impactful feature you'll want to be aware of is the ozonator or ozone generator.

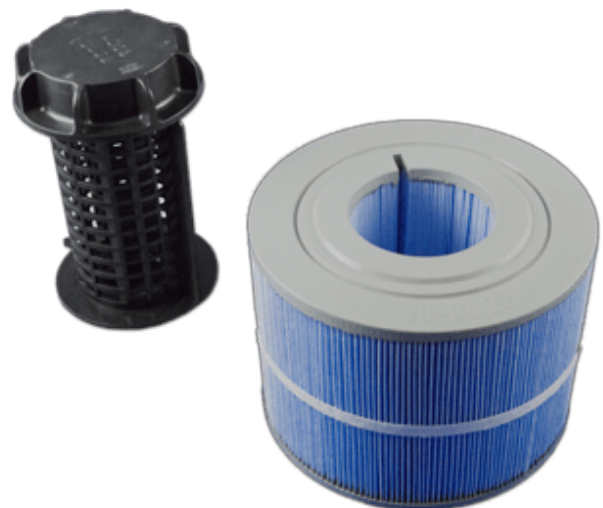
Ozone acts as a natural sanitizer, reducing the amount of chlorine and bromine needed to clean the spa's water. When an ozonator is built into your hot tub's plumbing design, it breaks down oxygen molecules into single atoms that recombine to form ozone, which in turn purifies the water flowing through the unit. The use of an effective ozonator is reported to reduce chemical sanitizer dependence by up to 60-90%.

HOT TUB FILTERS

Industry suppliers are also upping their game when it comes to hot tub filter performance. These filters work like the air filter in your car: water passes through the spa filter's fibrous fabric, trapping particles and contaminants that affect water clarity. Over time, the filter accumulates too much dirt and debris, causing it to clog and become ineffective.

As you'd guess, more advanced materials have improved what's trapped in the filter when water flows through, how it can be cleaned, and the filter's overall longevity. Better performing spa filters typically have a higher weight fabric with a specialized weave. Some are said to be dishwasher-safe, but this touted "dishwasher method" may not be a selling point for everyone and is definitely a personal choice!

In addition to materials, product design also plays a role in filter performance and ease of use. Coreless filters, those that have a removable cage, extend the life of a filter while making it easier to remove dirt and debris caught in the filter fibers. When the filter has no core, you can easily spray with a hose from within when cleaning, so contaminants are directed straight out of the cartridge rather than across the filter's entire diameter. The cage is a one-time purchase, so the cost of these coreless filters is also kept at a minimum.





HOT TUB CONNECTIVITY

One other hot tub feature that improves ease of use is wireless connectivity, or remote operational control, built into the hot tub's operating system. By connecting over the internet, you can access ozonator and filtration settings in addition to heating and jet function, adjusting as necessary. Quality spa brands build wifi capabilities into the control panel, so connecting via smartphone or other device is instant using a downloadable app.

Suppliers are also producing monitors that float in the hot tub while providing real-time information about the water balance. These products monitor, notify, and give next step instructions to ensure your water stays clean and clear between every use.

HOW TO MAINTAIN YOUR HOT TUB WATER

When it comes to water maintenance, two main characteristics need to be monitored in order to ensure balance: pH and alkalinity. pH is the measure of acid in the water and alkalinity is the water's ability to neutralize acid. If these measurements get too out of whack, the hot tub performance and longevity may deteriorate over time. Regulating chemicals used to manage these characteristics include an alkalinity increaser, a pH increaser, and a pH decreaser.



Along with regulating pH and alkalinity, it's also important to manage unwanted dirt and bacteria in the hot tub. These are the "little things" that have the potential to make your spa water appear cloudy or foamy and possibly even make users sick. To gauge water health, you should monitor sanitizing levels and add sanitizing agents like chlorine or bromine as needed to effectively kill bacteria.

What does it take to keep your water clean? The amount of chemicals used to maintain your spa water has to do with your hot tub features as well as the frequency of hot tub use and number of average users per use. If your spa has an ozone system, the degree to which you need to use sanitizers is lessened. These systems generate and introduce ozone into the spa water that works to effectively break down contaminants, leaving cleaner water and less dependence on sanitizers.

We should also mention the difference between "zapping" the bad stuff with regular sanitizing efforts and "shocking" the impurities out altogether. The difference here is simple: Lower concentrated chlorine and bromine sanitizers are typically used for zapping, while higher concentrated treatment is used for shocking. It's good to shock your tub when usage is high and/or the water starts to appear cloudy.





There are chemical-free alternative approaches to hot tub water maintenance. For a more in-depth look into water care chemicals and tips on how to use them, check out [Hot Tub & Spa Chemicals: The Ultimate Water Care Guide](#). Of course, your local dealer is another excellent source for specific chemical brands recommended for your spa usage and local climate/environmental conditions.

Perhaps the most straightforward way to protect your water from contaminants is to make sure the hot tub remains covered when not in use. Look for premium insulating and protective hot tub covers as these not only keep leaves and dirt out, but also shade your hot tub, preserving the life of your spa.

HOW TO CHANGE YOUR HOT TUB WATER

Even when you keep up with water care, it's still good to change your spa water periodically. Manufacturers typically recommend draining and refilling water every one to four months, depending on usage and visible water conditions.

Before you begin, you'll want to find the right place for the drained water to go. This should be an area in the yard that can handle a large quantity of water, without the risk of landing in a basement, or worse yet, a neighbor's yard. It's also a good idea to test the water first to make sure it won't kill your grass or vegetation. As long as the sanitizer level is less than 0.5 PPM, you should be okay.

Once you're ready, these are the steps to changing out your hot tub water:

1. Turn off the power at the breaker.
2. Locate the drain, which is usually located near the base of one of the exterior cabinet sides.
3. Pull the drain out (usually with a slight clockwise turn), then remove the drain cap.
4. Attach a standard garden hose to the drain spout to activate the drain.
5. Once completely drained, pull the drain spout all the way out, remove the hose, replace the drain cap, and push the drain back into the spa.



HOW TO CHANGE YOUR HOT TUB WATER

Over time, residue from oils, lotions, and other personal care products may cause buildup along the surfaces of your hot tub. In order to prevent buildup below the water line, you'll want to do an occasional wipe down of your hot tub. The ideal time to clean your tub surfaces, particularly the interior shell, is when the water is drained.

A thorough wax on, wax off is hardly necessary here. The spa interior can be cleaned simply with a damp cloth or sponge and mild dish soap. If there are any stubborn stains or you notice a line developing right at the water level, you can use a mild acrylic cleaning product or detergent. Even a mild glass cleaner can be an effective cleaning agent. When it comes to hard water stains and light scratches, check with your local hot tub dealer for additional expert guidance.





It's important to note that certain substances should never be used on your hot tub's shell since they could harm the surface and even void the warranty. Examples include alcohol, acetone, nail polish, lacquer thinners, gasoline, pine oil, and other abrasive cleaners.

The exterior cabinets of your spa are commonly prone to collecting dirt and dust left by blowing wind and weather conditions. These outer surfaces can easily be cleaned at any time with a damp cloth and mild detergent. You can also use a hose and spray attachment for a stronger wash. An UV protectant may also be applied after cleaning. Because hot tub exterior materials vary from one manufacturer to the other, it's always recommended to check your owner's manual or ask your local dealer.

HOW TO MAINTAIN YOUR HOT TUB COVER

Keeping your hot tub cover in good condition is key to prolonging its useful life. A cleaning and conditioning every month or so is all it takes. If regular care and cleaning don't take place, mildew can grow on the fabric portion of the cover, especially in humid climates.

Covers usually come with either vinyl or fabric surfaces. For vinyl, loose dirt can be sprayed away with a garden hose. Then, you can wipe the surface down with a soft brush or sponge and mild dish soap using a circular motion. (While BBQ lighter fluid has been known to help remove tough tree sap, it's a good rule to avoid petroleum-based cleaning agents on your cover as they can cause damage.) Spray to rinse again, then dry and apply a vinyl conditioner like saddle soap for added protection.



Aside from wiping dirt and debris away, fabric covers can be cared for on a spot-treatment basis as needed. When a stain appears, a soft brush with dish detergent or gentle laundry detergent can do the trick. Fabric covers should always air dry.

If a rip or tear occurs, it's best to check the cover's manufacturer for recommendations before attempting a DIY fix. They may have repair patches and kits available that work uniquely on their own products.

HOW TO CLEAN YOUR HOT TUB FILTERS

Filters are the ultimate dirt and debris collectors of the hot tub. They can and should be cleaned regularly just as you would the lint filter in your dryer or air filter in your car.

Depending on frequency and volume of use, filters should be cleaned every 3 to 6 weeks. Doing so will not only keep your water clean, but will prolong the use of your spa and save you unnecessary filter replacement costs in the meantime. With regular cleaning, filters can last up to 1 to 2 years.



Here are the basic steps to cleaning a hot tub filter:

1. Using the control pad, put spa in “hold” mode.
2. Remove the filter cap, filter plate, and filter cartridges.
3. Spray the filtration material with a high-pressure hose, working from top to bottom. Do NOT use a brush on the fibrous material as it could cause damage and affect the filter’s effectiveness.

To go for a deeper clean, you can also soak the filter in a filter cleaning agent supplied by your local dealer. There are a number of DIY online sources that suggest various methods for cleaning filters including the dishwasher method, but these are not recommended by the filter manufacturers. It should be assumed that any home product or DIY solution may end up harming the filter or your hot tub.



HOW TO CLEAN YOUR HOT TUB PILLOWS

With all the relaxation they provide, it’s no wonder hot tub pillows may require a periodic cleaning. To do so, you simply wipe dirt and grime off with a cloth and mild soap. Non-petroleum based protectant products that maintain water resistance and appearance are also available and are good to use about once a month.

Spa pillows can be prone to discoloration if exposed high sanitizing levels. To minimize discoloration risk, it’s best to take pillows off when shocking your hot tub’s water and leave the cover open for at least 30 minutes afterwards.



HOT TUB SEASONAL CARE

Soaking in your hot tub is a year-round activity you can enjoy no matter what climate you live in. For some owners, circumstances warrant more seasonal use. So what does maintenance look like from one season to the next? Let’s take a look at some helpful tips specifically related to winter and summer hot tub care.

hot tub winter maintenanceIn the winter, you’ll want to keep an eye on your spa’s water level to make sure it doesn’t get too low. It’s also advised to regularly check chemical levels even if it’s not being used as often. If you notice something isn’t working right, never drain the water—chances are the heater is the problem and draining the spa could result in frozen pipes. In this case, you can use a small space heater or service light inside the cabinet to ensure freezing doesn’t occur until a service technician is available to help.





You may have heard about winterizing your spa. This is not something you have to do if you're using the hot tub throughout the winter months. But if the spa isn't going to be used for over 6 weeks, winterizing it is the best way to ensure it will stay in good operating condition when the time comes to use it again.

Winterizing involves draining the spa, using a shop vac to remove the remaining water from the hot tub plumbing lines, and clearing out the pumps. During this process, it's critical to remove all water including that from the jets, air blower, filters, and the tub itself.

Premium Hot Tub Controls - Bullfrog Spas In the summer, the key is to make sure the hot tub doesn't overheat. This means avoiding prolonged filtration cycles, especially when the air temperature gets above 100 degrees. To change filtration cycle settings, wait for filtration mode to be "on" then set the run time to the minimum setting at the coolest time of the day. It's also helpful to leave the cover open regularly in order to let heat escape.



When seasonal issues arise, it's a good reminder that annual service inspections ensure everything in your spa is working as it should, preventing potential problems from developing down the road.

YOUR HOT TUB NEEDS ANNUAL SERVICE

We don't think twice about going to the doctor for an annual checkup, the dentist for an annual cleaning, or the dealership for an annual car tune-up. Making a service appointment for an annual "well-check" on your spa works much the same way. Prevention goes a long way in prolonging the life and health of a spa. And a certified hot tub technician is trained to ensure all is working as it should be.

The first thing a field technician will help with is the deep cleaning of your hot tub. Over time, biofilm buildup can accumulate in the hot tub's plumbing despite regular use of sanitizers. A technician will be equipped with the tools needed to completely remove this tougher layer of buildup that can contain viruses or bacteria and, of course, affect the hot tub's water balance.



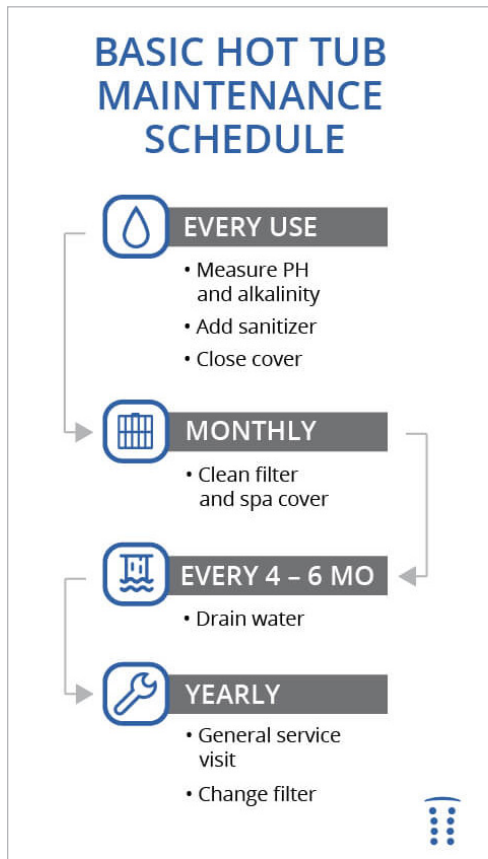
In addition to addressing water quality and imbalance issues, the inspection will involve a thorough look through hardware, wiring, and components within the spa. The idea here is not to find unnecessary updates or upgrades that add expense, but to correct smaller issues that ultimately protect against larger problems and more expensive repairs down the road, especially when it involves safety.

To find a service technician, your local spa dealer is a good place to start. It's ideal that your tech has a working knowledge not just with hot tubs, but with the manufacturer of the hot tub being serviced. They'll be able to address any technical questions you have about your spa. Plus, they'll be familiar with your hot tub's standard warranty coverage as well as any recent notifications the manufacturer has put out that may affect your hot tub's overall health.



HOT TUB MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

As you may have noticed, hot tub maintenance steps are often required at different intervals. To help keep track of what care needs to happen when, try making a maintenance schedule broken down by the varying time periods. Here's a start:



HOT TUB MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE APPS

If documenting this schedule on a whiteboard isn't really your style, there are a host of hot tub maintenance apps available that do the job just as well, if not better. Here are just a few you can check out:

- **Insta-Link Water Testing**
- **Nimbus Pool Doctor**
- **Pool-Calculator**
- **Pool Boy Pro**
- **Pool Monitor**





HOT TUB MAINTENANCE COSTS

As you'd guess, the cost of maintenance supplies depends on hot tub usage, both in terms of frequency and volume. So the totals can vary throughout the year and from one owner to another. Based on industry averages, here are some rough estimates of what it may cost to maintain a hot tub's health:

- **High Use:** \$40 per month
- **Average Use:** \$30 per month
- **Low Use:** \$20 per month

WHERE TO GET HOT TUB MAINTENANCE

In order to maintain balanced, clean water that's ready to use at any time, regular use of these common items is needed: test strips, pH increaser, pH decreaser, sanitizer, along with optional oxidizer and anti-foam treatment. Filters will also need to be purchased when they're due to be replaced. Other than that, cleaning supplies are minimal, comprising mostly of after-care conditioning and/or protectant.



The best source for hot tub supplies will always be your local spa dealer since they will be able to offer expert advice given local climate and conditions. If distance is an issue, another source would be online at SpaDepot.com which specializes in hot tub supplies e-commerce.

We've all heard that phrase "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." This applies just as well to hot tubs and spa ownership. Simple maintenance practices come at minimal expense. The bottom line is that your long-term sense of relief, escape, and connection is well worth it.