

# TimeOut Spas

*the best choice...*

## **SPAS, HOT TUBS AND JACUZZI'S FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

On this page we answer commonly asked questions however we have also compiled many Guides and Infopages that are published on this site and these deal in a more detailed manner with some of the subjects that we touch on in these Faq's. If you have a specific question that you would like answered please call or email us.

### **GENERAL QUESTIONS**

#### **What is the difference between hot tubs, jacuzzis and spas?**

Although the roots of these names are all different they mean the same thing. The "hot tub" was originally a wooden barrel that was sawn in half and filled with hot water to warm people in northern climes during the winter. Then in 1956, an idea was born. Why not treat a family member's arthritis with jetted warm water using a hydrotherapy pump? The Jacuzzi® brothers invented a pump that was hung on the side of a bathtub and the jacuzzi business was born. Later the word "spa" was coined relating the hot tub/jacuzzi to a thermal spring using the Roman word "spa". To clarify and save space we will now only use the term spa.

#### **How can I tell a good spa from a bad one?**

We understand that many of our customers are first time spa buyers and have no experience in this field. For example you might be surfing the web and seeing what seem to be identical spas (same size and number of pumps, jets etc) at very different prices. If you were looking for a car, something you have probably got some experience with and know more-or-less what you want, you would be suspicious if you saw a car that the vendors claimed to be the same as say a Volkswagen Golf but was half the price. Like most things that seem to be too good to be true this is often the case - especially with spas. To help you with this problem we have written a Buyers Guide which you will find a link to at the top of the page. In this guide we explain all the different things to look for and what to watch out for. This guide is not slanted to our products and we discuss all the different configurations and components of spas so that you will have at least a basic knowledge of what the salesman is talking about as well as a better idea of what it is you actually want. Remember that most sales people work on commission and are therefore going to try to sell you a higher priced spa so it pays to know what you want and what you don't.

## **How do I choose the right spa?**

You probably have a pretty good idea about how many people you want to be able to use the spa at one time and perhaps also about how big you want it to be. You may have space restrictions or you might want the biggest spa you can get. These are the first questions that need to be answered and then you can move on to the next question which is what shape do you want? Round, square, rectangular, triangular, heart-shaped? There are many shapes available and among these different shapes there are three basic styles that have to do with the layout of the seats and loungers. The first style is the standard spa which has one lounger plus 2 to 5 seats, the second style is a spa with no loungers - only seats and the third style is a spa with several loungers. Looking at these spa styles they can then be divided into two types. which also depend on the layout of the seats. The first type are what we call "view spas", we give them this name because all the people in the seats and loungers are basically looking in the same direction. Examples of this type in our range of spas would be the AquaClear Lakeview spa or the Balcony spa. In the second type, into which fall most round spas and spas with no loungers (as well as some of the square and rectangular models), all the people seated in the spa are looking at each other much like when one is sitting around a table. Examples of this type in our range of spas would be the AquaClear Family spa or the Sunbelt Luna spa. Obviously which style and type you want will depend on you and how you plan to use your spa. The last questions you need to answer are how many bells and whistles do you want? Spas can come with 20 jets or 100 jets, with stereos, televisions and even as exercise machines so the question is what do you want? Do you want something simple that will give you a nice massage and a good soak or do you want the full monte? Once these questions have been answered your dealer can then help you find the right model.

## **OPERATIONAL QUESTIONS**

### **How long should it take a spa to get hot?**

Spas do not have enormous heaters because they would cost too much to run so they are normally between a range of 1,5 kW to 4,5 kW. These heaters are normally sized in relation to the amount of water to be heated ie; bigger spas will have more water and therefore larger heaters and the time taken to heat the water will be about the same which is around 1,5° an hour. We calculate in terms of degrees per hour because the starting temperature can vary widely between summer and winter. So if you want to heat a spa from 16° to 37° you will be raising the temperature by 21° which will take 14 hours. The easiest way is to fill it one day for use the next day so if you are having a party you know what to do!

### **Is it better to keep your spa hot, or heat it up for each use?**

If you use your spa at least three to four times a week it is best to keep the spa hot. This way, your heater will cut in and out as it needs - keeping the spa warm at your set temperature. Generally even if you use your spa less often it is best to keep it warm as if you let it cool off completely heating it up from cold will be quite costly and often more than it would cost to keep it hot. Spas and spas are designed to be kept hot 24/7 and once it is hot you are only recuperating lost heat so the electrical consumption is low.

### **Can you run a spa cold?**

Normally you would want to do this only in the summer so you can use the spa to cool off in and you can simply turn the heat down below ambient temperature and it will stay cool. If your spa is standing out in the sun and you leave the cover off in the summer it will heat up by itself so if you want it cool keep the cover on in the day and take it off at night.

### **How long does it take to fill a spa?**

Most, if not all portable spas are filled with a hose pipe. The time it takes to fill it with water will depend on how much water needs to be put into the spa, what size of pipe you are using and your water pressure. This, of course, varies so it is really impossible to give a fixed time. For a mid-sized spa it normally takes 2-3 hours.

### **What is the average temperature for an outdoor spa?**

This depends on the time of year and season. During the summer, most people keep the spa at about 27°C, which is about skin temperature - however it might rise to a higher level depending on the ambient temperature. In the middle of winter, it is normal to be at 37,5°C or even 40°C however this is a question of personal taste - some people like their water hotter than others...

### **How long can I leave my spa unattended?**

When you have to go away for a week or two you can leave your spa full and turned off with the cover locked on and it will be fine. Before you do this you need to shock the water to insure that there is no bacteria left, please see our Infopage "Daily Water Care" for instructions. If you have someone who can come around once a week and put in a small dose of chlorine and run the spa for 20 minutes you can leave it

indefinitely however if you are going to be away for a while it is best to drain it down and then refill it with fresh water when you come back. You can only do this in winter in areas like the Costa de Sol where it never freezes because if the water freezes in the pipe of the spa you are in big trouble!

### **Why do all the jets suddenly come on?**

On most electronic systems the water is filtered twice a day and at the beginning of these filtration periods all the pumps and blower turn on to churn up the water so that any debris will be raised up and consequently filtered out. They will run for a few minutes and then stop but the filtration will continue for the programmed interval.

### **Why do the jets turn off?**

The water jets on almost all systems (Balboa, Gecko, Smart Touch, etc.) will only run for a fixed time, usually 15 or 20 minutes, and then will automatically switch off. The reason for this is that at high water temperatures, between 38° C and 40° C, if you stay too long in the water you run the risk of hyperthermia (raising the core temperature of your body too high) which will result in dizziness and possible loss of consciousness. So the manufacturers include this feature as a gentle reminder.

### **How much does a spa cost to run?**

Like other questions that depend on how much you use your spa this is a difficult question to answer with any accuracy. However some observations can be made. Choosing a spa that has a quality cover and good insulation will save a lot of money in the long run. Many spa covers are very thin and get waterlogged as time goes by and once they are waterlogged they have almost no insulating properties as the water transmits the heat straight through. Keeping your cover tightly closed when the spa is not in use is also very important. Most of the heat loss happens when you are using the spa as the entire surface area of the water is losing heat so don't leave it open when you are not using it and close it immediately when you get out. The siting of the spa is also quite important. Try to site the spa in a protected area out of the wind, if you do have to site it in a windy or exposed place then your heating costs will be higher. Surprisingly, the temperature you keep your spa at doesn't make much difference. If you keep it at 35° C or 40° C the cost difference is negligible as the heat loss when it is open will be almost the same.

## **SPA CHEMICAL QUESTIONS**

### ***When do I put the sanitizer (chlorine) in?***

Given that the history of spa use is longest in the US, where there are more spas per capita than in any other part of the world, the accepted norm is to put the sanitizer in before you get in. We think that is crazy because you are then getting into water full of chlorine. The reason for this, as far as we can tell, is the American legal system and their habit of constantly suing each other. In order to reduce their risk the companies there give this absurd advice. What we do here in Europe is much more sensible, we put the sanitizer in after we get out of the spa which kills all the bacteria we have just introduced so that the next time we get into the spa there is no bacteria and a minimal amount of chlorine. Of course, the Americans also keep their eggs in the refrigerator for no discernable reason...

### ***How long do you have to wait to use your spa after shocking it?***

If you are shocking the spa with chlorine granules then you must wait until the chlorine level has returned to below 5 ppm (parts per million) which may take up to 24 hours. To speed this up you can open the spa cover and run the jets and this will help dissipate the chlorine. For full shocking instructions see our Daily Water Care Infopage.

### ***How do I get rid of suds in the spa?***

If you only have a small soap problem, then a few drops of anti-foam liquid will make the soap bubbles go away. If the problem persists, or there is a major amount of soap in the spa, the only thing to do is to empty and refill with fresh water.

### ***What do you do if your spa water is cloudy?***

Cloudy spa water can be caused by two things, 1) that the filtration is failing to clean out the small dust particles and dead bacteria in the water or 2) that there is bacteria growing in the spa. If it is dust particles then you need to use a flocculant which acts like a coagulant and combines these small particles together so they are larger and can be filtered out. Remember that once the spa is nice and clean you need to remove the filters and clean them, if you don't they can become blocked. 2) If it's bacteria then you need to shock the spa with a large amount of chlorine, for full shocking instructions see our Daily Water Care Infopage.

## **Why is my spa water green?**

Green is not a good colour for spa water. It indicates that your spa has algae growing in the water. 1) do not use the spa until the problem is solved 2) Empty the water out and then scrub all surfaces with a chlorine solution. 3) rinse the spa out with clean water 4) refill with clean water 5) shock the spa with chlorine. Please see our Daily Water Care Infopage for full shocking instructions.

## **SPA USE QUESTIONS**

### **How long should you stay in your spa?**

There is no recommended time limit for bathing in your spa, however, it is best to keep yourself hydrated whilst you are in the spa by drinking plenty of water. If the temperature of the water is over 37° C you do run the risk of hyperthermia as noted above in the answer to the question "Why do the jets turn off?" If you do spend a long time in the spa then remember you will need to add a correspondingly larger amount of sanitizer to maintain the water when you get out.

### **Are spas good for your skin?**

Water is good for your skin, but hot water over a long period will cause your skin to dry out. It is important to maintain the correct pH and sanitizer balance so as not to cause skin irritation. Many people wrongly blame chlorine for skin irritation when in fact it is the pH.

### **Is it harmful to take a baby in to a spa?**

There is no reason that you cannot bring your baby into the spa if you keep the spa below 36,5° C (which is just below body temperature). Your baby will love it! If you keep the water at that temperature you should limit the amount of time the baby is in the spa but if you keep the temperature lower, at 35° C, for example then you can spend more time. Really it is not any different to a baby having a bath. The important part is that the baby should not overheat or get cold. By the way the same goes for all small children, not too hot and not too long...

### **Can you go into a spa if you have a pacemaker?**

Yes you can but not at high temperatures and you should consult your doctor beforehand in any event.

### **Can you go into a spa if you are pregnant?**

Within the first three or four months of a pregnancy it is normally safe to use a spa however once the baby starts developing it is not recommended to go into a spa. Please consult your physician if you think you are pregnant before you use the spa.

### **Can spas cause headaches?**

It is very important to drink plenty of water if you are in your spa for a long time at high temperatures. If you do not keep hydrated, then you could give yourself a headache which may lead to faintness or dizziness.

### **Can you use alcohol in a spa**

It is not recommended to drink alcohol when using a spa, especially a very hot one. However we all know that everyone does it. Like most things it is a question of balance and moderation. The hotter the water, the less you should drink. The most important point about alcohol is that if you have imbibed don't stay in the spa alone...

## **SPA MAINTANENCE QUESTIONS**

### **How often do I have to change the water?**

This is another one of those questions that depend on how much you use the spa. The basic rule of thumb is every 3, maximum 4, months for a spa that gets used 3 - 4 times a week. But, as noted on our Daily Water Care page if the water goes funny just change it and don't feel bad about it. A 3m X 5m pool will lose to evaporation alone in one month more than it takes to fill your spa.

### **How do you drain a spa?**

Many spas have bottom drains which you connect to a hose pipe and run to a drain. However if you have not got a bottom drain then this is not a big problem as you can purchase a submersible pump and some hose and can drain the spa that way just as easily. If you stop putting chlorine in the day before you can even use the water to irrigate your garden.

### **How do I clean my spa?**

General cleaning of the spa cannot be done using any soaps or other household cleaning products as this will cause the water to foam. Use only clean water and a

soft sponge or cloth, do not use any scrubbers as they will scratch the acrylic surface of your spa. If a small amount of soap gets into the water then a few drops of anti-foam will correct this.

If you find you have a greasy line around the waterline this means you have introduced sun creams, body creams or other oily products into the water. To remove these oils, if they will not come off with the sponge, use a very small amount of universal paint solvent on a cloth. Before you do this drain off some of the water so you can clean the line without introducing the solvent into the water.

If sand or other dirt has collected in the bottom of the spa you can easily remove it by making a syphon with your hose. To do this put the end of the hose into the spa and start the water running. Once the water is flowing into the spa turn it off at the tap. Making sure that the hose end in the spa is completely submerged disconnect the hose from the tap and lay it on the floor. Water should now start running backwards out of the spa onto the floor. You can now use the end of the hose that is in the spa as a vacuum cleaner sucking up all the debris. You will lose a little water doing this so remember to top the spa up afterwards.

Once a year you should use a special spa cleaner which is a liquid that you pour into the spa and it dissolves all oils and limescale build-up in the pipework and pumps of the spa. This is especially important if you drain and leave the spa empty for long periods as there is always some water trapped in the pipes and when this water goes off it leaves residues and bacteria in the pipes.

To clean the cover and surround you can use soapy water and a sponge or mop rinsing well when done. If your cover is out in the sun a lot you can also use a vinyl protector that you can find in any marina.

### **How do you clean a spa filter?**

Filters will clog up with dirt and grease over time until they no longer allow the water to flow through. When this happens the water pressure will drop so the jets can feel weaker and the heater may cut out and you may get error messages. It is important to thoroughly clean your filters on a regular basis, You do this by removing it from the filter housing (below the skimmer) and then cleaning out any debris that is trapped in the pleats of the filter by spraying water in them with a hose. Clean each pleat individually turning the filter as you go. If this does not do the job then you either need a new filter or you have to clean the filter using a chemical cleaner. To use a chemical cleaner add it to water in a bucket and then let the filter soak for 24 hours. This will chemically break down the grease and calcium that has accumulated so that when you remove the filter from the cleaner and wash it with a hose it will be completely clean again.