



# HOT TUB BUYER'S GUIDE



**WATERTREE**

Hot Tubs • Saunas • Water Treatment

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We hope you enjoy this guide, after all it was made for you! It tackles questions like; How do hot tubs work? How much do they cost? How to maintain a hot tub, and where to put your new hot tub. It's all explained right here!

If you didn't already know it, it's a great time to be a hot tubber. Portable hot tubs have never more popular than they are now. New technology, like the **Freshwater IQ Monitoring System (auto water care testing)** along with other improvements has brought hot tub ownership to new heights. You will likely discover the same along your shopping journey.

Lastly, South Dakota is a top spot for hot tub ownership. We like to call it 'Soak Dakota'. Long winter months and comfortable summer evenings make it the perfect climate for hot tubbing and a well worthy investment.

Good luck along your shopping journey and never hesitate to ask for help. Be well!

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*Soak*  
**DAKOTA**



# HOW DOES A HOT TUB WORK?

Once you know how a hot tub works, you can successfully operate and enjoy your tub for many years to come! In this guide, we'll highlight everything you need to know about the workings of your hot tub, empowering you to learn about specific features that are best for you, how to maintain it, and how to troubleshoot any issues effectively and efficiently. Let's get started.

## WHAT IS A HOT TUB?

Simply put, the term "hot tub" is normally used to refer to an above ground spa. A hot tub, or spa, is a completely self-contained vessel, filled with water that is typically heated, contains water, jets, and is designed to provide a pleasurable soaking experience for users. There are a multitude of different makes and models of hot tubs with varying features, but essentially, all hot tubs operate in a similar fashion with the same basic components. To get a better understanding, let's take a look at the main components of a hot tub.

## WHAT ARE THE MAIN HOT TUB COMPONENTS?

There are many components to a hot tub but here are the most important:

### Shell

It's exactly what it sounds like. As the inner hot tub surface (typically made of acrylic or another weather proof and sanitizer resistant thermoplastic) this contains the water, has various seats in its mold, and provides mounting points for the jets. The shell is reinforced or supported with fiberglass backing, or high density polyurethane foam or some combination of the two, in order to be able to support the water, equipment and bathers.

### Cabinet

The purpose of the hot tub cabinet is two-fold. Not only does it provide structural support for the shell and equipment, but it also hides the less aesthetically pleasing equipment like plumbing, pumps, and heaters behind stylish doors. Instead of wood cabinets on older models, today's cabinets are made from weather resistant polymer and are extremely easy to maintain.

### Pumps

One or more pumps are needed to circulate the water in and out of the hot tub, and for filtering and operating the jets. The pump allows for two speeds: low speed for filtering (and most heating) and high speed for operating the jets. Low-speed operation is controlled by the spa pack based on the thermostat and time clock, if one is present. High-speed operation, controlled by a spa pack air button, allows for high-pressure streams in the jets. And if you are curious just how many hours you should run your hot tub for adequate filtering, experts say that 24 hours/day with an energy efficient pump is best, but between 2 - 4 hours twice a day is a minimum standard.

## **Jets or Hydrojets**

Just about everyone's favorite hot tub feature are the jets. They are responsible for the powerful bubbles that massage the body and help relieve muscle soreness. In more technical terms, a jet is a nozzle, and the air that is drawn through a constricted section of it creates a pressurized venturi effect. The water stream generated through the pump mixes with the air and together (with a little help from the venturi effect), they create soothing and massaging bubbles that can be adjusted by the user.

## **Blowers**

Some older hot tubs may use special air blowers to create additional bubbles in the water. These can be used instead of or in addition to the typical air jets, although their use dramatically increases electrical consumption which rises cost of ownership.

## **Spa Pack: Controller and Heater**

The spa pack contains a controller and heater in one unit. The controller safely allows the filter, pump, heater, and jets to efficiently provide the functions of filtering, heating and water jets. The heater heats the water each time it circulates through the heater for a certain amount each time. The spa pack can also control the lights or provide power for an ozonator (water cleaning mechanism).

## **Topside (or Spa-side) Control**

The control pad allows bathers to change water temperature from inside or outside the hot tub. If people are using the tub for a longer amount of time, set the temperature to 98 or 99 degrees, and never let it exceed 104 degrees Fahrenheit! This control also lets the user control the pumps, lights, and more.



## **Filters / Sanitation System**

Filters and water care sanitizers are critical to keeping your hot tub clean and your water clear. For optimal results, you need to know and follow your ideal maintenance instructions and schedule to keep your tub running the way it was designed to. The filters are usually located in a designated filter area accessible from the top of the hot tub itself and consist of one or more screw-in filters with a strainer or skimmer.

## **Ozonator**

While its functions are similar to chlorine or bromine systems, the ozonator also helps destroy organic material, but with a special light injected into the spa through a venturi. While effective for helping keep the hot tub clean, sanitizers still must be added to the water. The ozonator is typically controlled by the spa pack and is generally turned on whenever the low-speed pump is operating.

## **Lights**

Today's hot tubs have many beautiful lighting options, with controls conveniently located on the top surface of the tub. Whether it's incandescent lights or energy-saving LED lights in a variety of stunning colors with preset programs, you're sure to find lighting that delivers the ultimate relaxing environment.

## **Equipment Area and Access Door**

While this may differ slightly between various hot tub models, look at your user manual to get an idea of where your parts and plumbing live. For any maintenance issues that you cannot do on your own, it's best to call a professional for next steps.

# WHAT ARE THE BASIC FUNCTIONS OF A HOT TUB?

Now that you know the main components of a hot tub, you already understand how a hot tub works and its basic functionality.

- Drain & Fill the tub
- Light the tub
- Operate the blower
- Filter the water
- Power the jets
- Provide ozone injection
- Heat the water

*If your jets are not working properly:*

- Check the drain cover and make sure it's not blocked
- Check and clean (or replace!) your filter
- Check for an air leak, possible with an O-ring out of place or loose/cracked valve
- Clogged jet: While these are uncommon, this could be a sign of a broken part trapped inside and blocking the water flow
- Low water level: Your water flow will be impacted if your spa skimmer is sucking in air; monitor and replenish your water flow

## **HOW DOES A HOT TUB RUN?**

Electricity is needed to run your hot tub, and it's important to know your specifications (i.e. nameplate voltage) required to operate your spa, and to get a professional electrician to help with the installation.

And, should you leave your hot tub running? It depends on the weather. If you live in a warm climate, you can turn the temperature down between uses. If you are in a colder climate and use it a few times a week, you'll save money by leaving it running. However, if you are heading out for the winter, and don't expect to use it for several months, it's critical you consider using professional dealer services to winterize your tub properly.

## **HOW DO I KEEP MY HOT TUB RUNNING SMOOTHLY?**

Once you have your hot tub, keeping it maintained is up to you! Luckily, here at Watertree we are happy to help you with all of your questions on what it means to be a hot tub owner, how to run and maintain it, and how to find the hot tub that works best for you. Give us a call, email us, or pop by our showrooms in Rapid City, SD and Spearfish, SD. We are always happy to help you learn more.



# HOW MUCH DOES A HOT TUB COST?

A hot tub is an investment in your home, entertainment, and quality of life. It's an amazing thing to own, but how much is a hot tub exactly? Can you afford it? We will help guide you through the main costs of a hot tub to better help you make this decision.

# "HOW MUCH FOR A HOT TUB" ALL COMES DOWN TO UNIQUE DIFFERENCES

All hot tubs are not equal, and there are many options and variations in today's market. While that may seem overwhelming to consider, it's actually a huge benefit since you can get exactly what you want. As a good first step, let's break down a few key areas that determine the price of a hot tub included below.

## Hot Tub Size

Bigger hot tubs cost more to manufacture than smaller hot tubs, so larger spas will be more expensive. If you aren't sure what size you'll need, think beyond your immediate family, and consider how often you'll invite people over to dip in the tub. (Most folks focus on users that will be enjoying the tub most of the time when considering size.)

## Hot Tub Features

Thanks to technology, today's hot tubs have some amazing features. We will dive more into these later, but it's important to note that many desirable spa features, like lots of powerful jets, touchscreen control panels and improved filtration systems, are already built into the cost since they are now standard features included on premium and luxury spas.

## Hot Tub Accessories

Depending on your wants and needs, there are various add-on accessories and options (cover lifter, entertainment systems, and steps) that could affect the total purchase price for a hot tub. However, if these options can enhance your overall spa experience, it's a good idea to look into these offerings.

## Engineering and Quality

A spa built with advanced engineering will be more efficient, more intuitive and more reliable. A hot tub is built with many expensive operating components like heaters, jet pumps, and circulation pumps, and

it's wise to have the best quality parts upfront versus costly fixes and replacements down the road with subpar components.

## **Hot Tub Design**

The look of your desired hot tub is completely up to you, as there are so many options to choose from. In general, hot tubs with a leading-edge design will be pricier as they are usually made with more expensive materials.

## **Geographic Location**

Hot tubs can be expensive items to deliver because of their size and weight, and the freight cost. Some dealers will waive the cost of delivery and a standard installation. However, if you live far away from the place where you purchased your hot tub you should anticipate paying a bit more for delivery (and future support if needed).



## WHAT IS THE AVERAGE COST OF A HOT TUB?

Before we walk through some ballpark price ranges, did you know that many hot tub dealers offer financing? It's important to check with your retailer on options, especially if you're looking to invest in a model that offers the best long-term value.

Speaking of your local retailer, if at all possible to see the hot tub you are buying in person please do! Buying over the phone or online is an option, but an in-person experience has its benefits when making such a large investment. Things like a hot tubs overall fit-and-finish, how easy it is to control, or how quiet it runs (or loud!), are best determined in person. An in-store visit also allows you to meet the people (retailer) you are purchasing from, who will be responsible for the type of experience you have over the life of the hot tub. Plus, ask about taking a test soak! What's better than that for an in-store experience?

OK, back to the numbers. The average price of a hot tub can range from about \$4,000 to \$20,000 and more. While the initial cost can seem like sticker shock, it's important to zoom out and consider your long-term value and enjoyment in the tub that you select. The best option will accommodate your ideal hot tub usage, your available maintenance time, your operating cost budget, and your desired life-span for the hot tub.

Here are some general price ranges below, but remember that various factors explored earlier will all impact the final price, and this price can only be determined at the dealership.

### **Entry Level Hot Tubs: \$4,000 To \$10,000 Starting Range**

These hot tubs are lightweight and easy to move, as they are typically rotationally molded, meaning the spa interior and exterior are formed out of a durable plastic. As a very basic model, they are "plug-and-

play" hot tubs requiring only a 110v electrical connection. Essentially, you just need to fill it up, plug it in, and soak!

### **Value-Priced Hot Tubs: \$7,000 To \$14,000 Starting Range**

This is the entry zone for the spas you typically associate with hot tubs: high gloss acrylic shells, synthetic, wood-like cabinets and lots of fun features, like multiple jets lining the spa seats. While the bells and whistles are shiny and the features are enticing, it's also critically important to dig deeper into the quality components and performance features like insulation that keep energy costs low. You want a full picture into the outside and inside of the tub to best evaluate its value, including access to customer service and warranties.

### **Premium Hot Tubs: \$10,000 To \$18,000 Starting Range**

While the prices of these hot tubs are more expensive, they are also created with more advanced engineering and design for a more satisfying longterm ownership experience. Not only are these premium hot tubs more energy efficient than value-priced spas (reducing the ongoing cost of ownership), they also have more robust features (high jet counts, water features and lighting), higher-quality spa components (heater, pumps) and more advanced control systems. They may also have functionality that can reduce maintenance time requirements like top-of-the-line filtration systems and water care options that can reduce the maintenance time requirements. And, warranty coverage is often longer than spas at lower price ranges.

### **Luxury Hot Tubs: \$13,000 to \$20,000+ Starting Range**

Hot tubs in this range are the cr me de la cr me of spas, and this investment should provide 15-20 years of enjoyment, not to mention the lowest energy costs. simplest operation, and most minimal maintenance. With these top-of-the line hot tubs, you will be getting high-quality components, durable construction, luxury spa features like one-of-a-kind jet systems for the best hydrotherapy massage, leading-edge



design that makes your hot tub your backyard focal point, and top-of-the-line filtration systems for the cleanest spa water possible!

### **What About Used Spas?**

As with anything pre-owned, used spas come with both advantages and risks. The upside is the cheaper cost, and many reputable dealers offer refurbished units that have been thoroughly cleaned, tuned up and double-checked for flaws (some even offer warranties). The downside is that these tubs have already been used, the lifespan will be shorter, and the warranty on pre-owned spas is inevitably shorter (or past viability) than the warranties on new spas.

## **HOW MUCH DOES A NEW HOT TUB COST AFTER THE INITIAL PURCHASE?**

This is a great question because once you buy the hot tub, you need to keep it running. Here are two frequently asked questions:

### **How much does it cost to install a hot tub?**

This will depend on the hot tub that you purchase and the options of the dealership.

### **How much does it cost to run a hot tub?**

Again, this is a great question for your hot tub retailer as the specifics will depend on your hot tub model, current home set-up (i.e. if you already have a solid foundation or need to build something, current electrical setup}, your chosen water system (chlorine, bromine, salt water sanitization, supplemental ozonator) and the suggested products (i.e. filters, cleaning agents) that will be best for your hot tub moving forward. The best retailers make written, guaranteed representations about ownership costs for every model they sell.

# DOES IT MATTER WHAT SPA DEALER I CHOOSE TO PURCHASE MY HOT TUB FROM?

Yes, yes, and YES! Purchasing a hot tub is a significant investment, so you need to find a hot tub retailer that you can trust. Some questions to consider as you evaluate dealers:

- How long have they been in business?  
Longer is generally better.
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Longer is generally better.
- What are the customer reviews like? Do they have referrals from satisfied customers?
- Do they provide hands-on training to how hot tubs actually work?
- Do they offer many types of hot tub brands, makes and models?
- Do they provide access to continued customer support/questions after the purchase?
- Has the dealer been carrying the same brand for awhile or do they commonly switch to different brands?

At WaterTree, we pride ourselves on being experts in the hot tub industry, not just people who sell tubs. No matter where you are in the process, or what you are looking for, we'd love to help you find the hot tub that is exactly right for you. Give us a call, email us, or stop by one of our showrooms in Rapid City or Spearfish, SD. We look forward to meeting you and discussing your needs and budget.



# HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO RUN A HOT TUB?

Thinking about purchasing a hot tub, but not sure what it will cost to run it? Good news: It's less work and money than you may think.

## HOW MUCH IT COSTS TO MAINTAIN A HOT TUB COMES DOWN TO THE VARIABLES

### Hot Tub Specifications

The cost of maintaining your hot tub is completely dependent on the type of hot tub you purchase since all hot tubs can vary in dimensions, materials, and functionality. Your hot tub selection process should factor in many things including your desired functionality (i.e. water capacity, pump power, wattage, heater power) and features (i.e. seats, jets, lighting, entertainment) as well as quality engineering. While higher-end spas are initially more expensive at initial purchase, these models may be less expensive for ongoing maintenance and care down the road. As an example, things like high-quality insulation and a dedicated circulation pump will save you a lot of money overtime on energy efficiency alone.

The best way to get a real grasp on the maintenance costs and requirements for your hot tub is to talk directly to your hot tub retailer. Ask them to help you compare and contrast the short- and long-term trade-offs of different models, especially if you are on the fence between a few options and/or price points. You may be surprised to learn

how much a different choice can positively impact the overall maintenance costs for the life of the hot tub!

## Hot Tub Installation

Your hot tub retailer can give you a more accurate quote for installation cost as it depends on many factors like hot tub location and size, and complexity of the installation. Some dealers will waive additional costs for a "standard installation." If you have a tricky installation site or need a crane to lift your hot tub on top of your deck, there will be additional costs. Ask your dealer for an estimate.

## Average Monthly Electricity Cost

*How much electricity does a hot tub use?*

Would you be surprised to learn that the best engineered, most highly insulated hot tubs can cost around \$25 to \$40 per month to run? Of course, it's the finer details that will determine this final monthly bill. A few initial tips:

- Larger hot tubs cost more to heat than smaller hot tubs
- The more you use your hot tub, the more you'll use your heater
- Hot tubs are more expensive to heat in the winter than in the summer
- An ozonator device can boost electricity bills (talk to your hot tub retailer to see if this product makes sense for your hot tub)

Another factor to toss in the ring is the efficiency of your hot tub. A modern energy efficient hot tub with improved insulation and powerful heaters can alter costs in a positive way.

If you are looking to get an estimate of the electricity costs for a hot tub, try using this energy efficiency calculator located at <https://www.hotspring.com/hot-tub-installation-planning-tools/energy-efficient-hot-tubs-energy-costs> to get an initial ballpark, but please note that the most accurate information will come from the dealer that has all your hot tub specifications on hand.

If you are looking at a WaterTree hot tub, please ask for our written Energy Cost Guarantee (we pay if we're wrong) for the electrical costs of every hot tub we sell .... turns out we're the only retailer who offers this accountable guarantee.

### **Average Water Care Cost**

The basic level of hot tub water, care (using bottled chemicals) costs around \$20 per month to maintain your hot tub, however this depends on what water system you choose. Upgrading your water care system may be initially more expensive but will save you money and maintenance time in the future. Additionally, top-tier salt water systems (that create water cleaners from salt and reduce the need for chemical additives) are exceptional for minimal maintenance and overall improved spa experience.

### **Hot Tub Cover**

While this seems like a small footnote, a good hot tub cover can be a make or break addition to your hot tub for keeping the heat in and making it more energy efficient.

### **Other Needed Products**

In order to keep your hot tub in top condition all throughout the year, you will need to maintain your tub properly. You will need to regularly balance your water, clean and replace filters, clean/drain/refill your tub, and make sure it stays protected in harsh winter months. This routine

maintenance will require some basic products and supplies but talk to your dealer to make sure you have everything you need.

### **P.S. How Long Does a Hot Tub Last?**

While this answer will vary depending on the model of hot tub you choose (the more luxury models are designed to have the longest life-span). the best way to lengthen the life of your hot tub is proper care and maintenance.

## **I'M READY TO BECOME A HOT TUB OWNER! NOW WHAT?**

It's exciting to become a hot tub owner, but it requires the right education. Here at WaterTree, we want to help you with all stages of this process, and make sure you feel ready to set forth into hot tub ownership! Give us a call, email us, or drop by our Rapid City or Spearfish, SD showroom. We are always ready to give you all the details you need to make the right hot tub decision.



# HOW TO MAINTAIN A HOT TUB: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

If you've been thinking about becoming a hot tub owner, but don't think you can handle the maintenance of owning one, you can stop worrying now. With today's innovative hot tub models and options, it's easy to maintain your hot tub without spending a lot of your free time doing so. While it does take some work, it pales in comparison to all the relaxing hours you'll spend soaking blissfully in your tub. In this section, we'll break down everything you need to know about how to keep your hot tub in tip-top shape.

## HOW MUCH MAINTENANCE IS A HOT TUB? WHAT PARTS AM I MAINTAINING?

First off, you won't need to maintain the outside of the hot tub at all! Staining and sealing the wood is a thing of the past. Today's hot tubs have synthetic wood cabinets that require almost no maintenance at all, and they just need an occasional hose down for easy cleaning.

## HOT TUB WATER CARE: AS LITTLE AS 15 MINUTES EACH WEEK

If the term "balancing the pH" intimidates you, don't worry! With guidance from your expert hot tub dealer and key products on hand, it's simple to keep your water balanced, clear, and clean. Hot tub water care is composed of a few steps: balance the water at start~up, make sure there is a



certain amount of sanitizer in the spa water before each use, and monitor the levels with a quick spa test strip once a week to ensure it's all correct. It's also important to note that your water care requirements will be dependent on the system you choose (chlorine, bromine or salt water sanitization, or the presence of an ozonator). Ask your hot tub retailer about how these systems compare with one another for maintenance requirements.

## **HOT TUB FILTER CARE: AS LITTLE AS 15 MINUTES EACH MONTH**

Why do you have to clean your spa filters? Because mineral particles or calcification from hard water can clog any water filtration system. Depending on your hot tub, you'll have between 1 to 5 filters that need to be cleaned with some basic steps:

- Rinsing filters: Once a month (there are also many filter sprays)
- Deep cleaning filters: Every couple of months, soak them in a bucket with special cleansers. Some filters are even dishwasher-safe, making this even easier & faster
- Replacing filters: Filters should be replaced on the requested replacement schedule or as needed, especially if the cleaning is no longer doing the trick. And, if one filter is dirtier than the other filters, it's probably connected to a separate low speed circulation pump and is doing most of the filtering.

## **DRAINING AND REFILLING THE HOT TUB**

Draining and filling can be as little as one time each year with a salt water system (3-4 times each year with traditional water care). To ensure your hot tub stays in mint condition, especially if the balanced water isn't looking as crystal clear, it's time to roll up your sleeves. It's important to realize that bacteria can survive in your spa despite the sanitizer you add due to a sticky substance that forms in your hot tub plumbing called biofilm. These bacteria can be host to various illnesses, and the goo inside the lines can't be removed through normal spa water circulation or regular cleaning.

Before you drain your spa, flip the hot tub breaker to cut all power and eliminate risk of electrical shock. If your hot tub has a floor drain, simply remove the cap from the drain, attach a garden hose, and open the drain valve OR use a sump pump that will speed up the process (but be sure to shut it off when it stops pumping water!). As a side note, make sure you first double-check with your city's ordinances on hot tub drainage regulations as some cities require you to drain your hot tub water into the sewer system. This is NOT a storm drain, since that leads to natural bodies of water. If you don't have sewer access, you can run a hose into the drain of a utility sink or water the lawn or gardens with old spa water once the chemicals have dissipated.

Luckily, when you add a line flush product as the first step of your draining process, the special cleaner breaks down biofilm. Once you've added it, let it circulate for a minimum of 20 minutes. (If it's your first time cleaning your hot tub, but you haven't been using a line flush, you should allow the line flush product to circulate for a few hours. Just follow product directions). It's going to look gross while it's cleaning, but that is the power at work.

## HOW TO CLEAN THE HOT TUB

Once the water is gone, it's time to give the shell (the inner core of the hot tub) a good cleaning. Be sure to know what products are best for your tub as it cannot stand up to harsh chemical cleaning products. Hot tub cleaner, diluted white vinegar, or diluted bleach can all be good options depending on your tub, and be sure to use a soft cloth or non-scratch nylon scrubber to remove residue. Don't forget about getting to those nooks and crannies, a prime hiding spot for possible mildew, algae, or bacteria. Then, rinse really well and drain all this water, and double-check that all your jets are open after your cleaning session so the air won't be trapped. This is also the perfect time to clean your hot tub cover and any spa pillows. If you decide on a salt water system that extends the spa water life up to 12 months with proper care, you may only need to drain, clean and refill the spa as little as once a year.

## HOW TO REFILL THE HOT TUB

You are almost done! First, perform a quick check: the breaker is off, the drains are closed, and the sump pump is removed. When refilling your hot tub, use a hose filter to reduce impurities such as calcium and copper that may affect your water chemistry and overall spa health. This is a quick fix for higher quality water and reduced staining risk. However, if you've had staining problems in the past, it's worth adding a dose of metal sequestrant during refills. Now, insert your hose into the filter compartment (helping force trapped air in your circulation system), and then begin filling your spa. Do not overfill your tub as it can cause big issues like backflow into your heater. If you overfill it, drain the excess right away. Finally, turn your spa breaker back on.

## HOW TO RESTART THE HOT TUB

Now that your spa breaker is back on, and the water is filled, let it re-heat back up! Allow the water to circulate and heat up to at least 80°F (27°C). Be sure to turn off air valves if you have them so they don't disrupt chemical distribution. Test the water and adjust pH, alkalinity, and calcium hardness, if necessary. Then, cover the spa for 24 hours to let the water warm up and the chemicals circulate. Finally, retest the water when the spa reaches 100°F (38°C). You likely won't need to adjust anything, but this final step ensures the water is balanced and you are ready to soak.

## HOW DO YOU WINTERIZE A HOT TUB?

Having a hot tub in a colder climate during the winter is an amazing luxury to enjoy, but it also has some considerations depending on your plans. Before we get into the how of winterizing a hot tub, let's quickly determine if you need to.

### **If you are spending most of the winter at home**

Keep your hot tub running! Winterizing your hot tub can be complicated, so if you plan to enjoy it, keep it filled, test and treat your water on schedule, and keep it ready for you.

### **If you are taking a short (up to two consecutive weeks) vacation during winter**

Before you head out on vacation make sure the filters are clean, the water is freshly sanitized, and you secure your tub with a childproof cover. To save energy, you can also lower the spa temperature by five or ten degrees but make sure it stays warm since freezing damage can be extremely detrimental to your hot tub.

## If you are going to be a snowbird this winter and heading out the entire season

You will absolutely need to winterize your tub, and since this is an extensive process that requires precision, it's ideal to seek the help of a professional service to do this right. In fact, the most damage that occurs to hot tubs is caused by improper winterization. Damage from freezing is very expensive to repair, so if you have any doubts, contact a local spa professional to do this for you so you can focus on your vacation.

- Plan ahead with an early start; the water must be cleaned before draining and the temperature must be above 40 degrees Fahrenheit to do so.
- Turn off the circuit breaker for the spa's electrical line and if possible, unplug the unit.
- Draining: Once the power is turned off, the tub needs to be drained and dried thoroughly so no remnant water can freeze. This will require wet-dry vacuuming and careful towel drying. All filter cartridges also need to be removed, cleaned, and stored indoors along with any wireless panel remotes.
- Turn off your spa heater.
- Open drain plugs and remove water. The same goes for blow jets since water can get trapped in your jet plumbing and damage your hot tub if it freezes. Make sure this is drained completely, either manually or by a shop vac.
- Add Propylene Glycol antifreeze into the specified openings where water may enter or leave your spa (jets, filter, standpipes, etc) to keep your spa's pipes from freezing. For safety, never use an antifreeze containing Ethylene Glycol (the kind you use in your car) in your hot tub since it's toxic.

- Cover your tub and put plywood boards on top of the cover to protect from snow and ice damage, finish it with a plastic tarp on top of everything.
- On portable, cabinetized spas, close and secure the equipment hatch door. Often, creatures will try to nest inside spa cabinets over the winter and cause expensive damage with wire-chewing!
- When you get back, all traces of the antifreeze must be removed, and then the tub should be properly refilled.

Again, this is a very specific process susceptible to human error, and it's a great idea to get help from professionals if you will be winterizing your tub this season.

And, a few other quick tips for keeping your spa perfect in the winter.

- Consider a winter blanket: Keep your spa hot year-round, even in areas with freezing temperatures, to maximize energy efficiency.
- Check for wear and tear, as well as ensure the seal is tight, on a regular basis.
- Remove snow and ice: Routinely brush snow off of your spa cover and splash warm water on ice rather than prying it off.



## HOW DO YOU KEEP HOT TUB WATER CLEAR?

Talk to your hot tub professional about what products are best for your specific hot tub. If you have cloudy water, probable causes may include:

- Dirty filters.
- Excessive oils or organic matter
- Improper sanitizing (suspended particles or organic matter)
- Overused or old water
- Metals in your water. If you're not using a hose filter when you fill your tub, metal contaminants in your hard water could be making it cloudy.
- Nature: tree seed pods, dead leaves, grass clippings, and all the other natural matter can get into the hot tub. Not only may sanitizers try to attack these instead of bacteria, this nature debris can contribute to clogging.
- Poor water chemistry
- Insufficient sanitizer levels, especially if you have had many spa bathers. Since humans have quite a bit of elements on our skin, a shower before a soak is always a must to maintaining a clean tub.

# WHAT ARE THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF USING A HOT TUB?

Thinking about getting a hot tub for your home? Beyond relaxation, are you aware of all the healthy benefits of owning hot tub? We've got the facts here.

## HOT TUB BENEFITS: FAQs

Included below are some of the most frequently asked questions around hot tub health benefits. Please note that these are general observations and recommendations based on existing research and testimonials regarding hot tub hydrotherapy. However, these do not replace the medical advice you have received from your physician. If you have specific medical questions, especially around pre-existing medical conditions when it comes to your hot tub usage, please talk to your doctor.

## IS A HOT TUB GOOD FOR SORE MUSCLES?

Hydrotherapy uses water to deliver temperature and pressure changes to the body and it is highly beneficial for anyone with tightness in their muscles or back pain. Immersion in hot tub water boosts circulation, sending more blood flow to the muscles, which helps alleviate pain-causing chemicals that build up in muscle tissue. That's why after a soak you feel some temporary (and much needed!) pain relief. And, it's



also a mental reprieve from pain as this soak promotes the release of endorphins and suppresses pain messages sent to the brain.

## **CAN A HOT TUB HELP WITH SWELLING?**

When we are immersed in hot tub water, this water puts pressure on our body, and it is this very same pressure that can reduce swelling. As an example, our ankles and feet are more likely to swell on the land than in water. And, as we discussed in our salt water benefits article, salt water therapy can be especially effective for swelling. According to the National Strength and Conditioning Association, swelling can be treated with hot salt water therapy since salt water has a higher solute concentration than body fluids, helping open pores and pull fluids out of the skin caused from backup in swollen areas.



## IS A HOT TUB GOOD FOR JOINT PAIN? LIKEWISE, IS A HOT TUB GOOD FOR ARTHRITIS?

As we step into a hot tub, we become buoyant. This means that we are putting less weight and less pressure on our body and giving our joints a break from gravity. Pain science research indicates that warm water therapy can:

- Help ease painful joints
- Reduce inflammation and stiffness in joints
- Restore and preserve strength, mobility, and flexibility in joints (if done regularly)
- Increase joint mobility

While soaking in a spa is recommended for many arthritis sufferers, it is not for everyone. Always consult your personal physician for health advice.



## **IS A HOT TUB BENEFICIAL TO HEART HEALTH AND/OR CIRCULATION?**

When a person is immersed in hot water, the heart works at a higher capacity and more efficiently. The arteries and veins dilate to carry more blood, and the blood may flow more easily through the body, enhancing circulation. According to the American Journal of Physiology, there may be a 59% increase in blood flow with younger people and a 22% increase with older people. Of course, this temporary boost in circulation is specific to the areas that are being massaged and the duration of your hot tub soak.

Additionally, it is believed that warm water immersion can help reduce the effects of cardiovascular risk factors, but this is very important to discuss with you, doctor if you have an existing heart condition or are looking for heart health advice.

## **DOES A HOT TUB LOWER BLOOD PRESSURE?**

Studies say that most people see their blood pressure go down when they are immersed into warm water. It is believed that soaking in hot water for up to 20 minutes will cause organs of the endocrine system to become less active, and can decrease blood pressure, relaxing the body. However, anyone with high blood pressure should consult his or her physician to determine if a hot tub soak is beneficial.

## **IS A HOT TUB GOOD FOR YOU IF YOU EXERCISE?**

If you are an avid fitness fanatic, whether as a professional athlete or at-home workout warrior, you know how sore and stiff your muscles can get after a good workout. A hot water soak is great for promoting flexibility in muscles, allowing for better stretching and helping im-

prove your range of motion either before or after strenuous exertion. Heat therapy helps increase blood flow, stimulate healing, and relax muscles. In fact, you'll benefit from soaking in the hot tub before and after exercise. It's also important to note that studies have shown that both heat and cold therapy can promote healing and prevent muscle damage following exercise, helping keep your body durable for your future workout routines.

**So, how do you combine your hot tub usage with your exercise routine? It's totally up to you, but consider a couple suggestions:**

- Prior to your exercise, soak in the hot tub for 10-20 minutes, helping get your blood flowing and muscles loose. Then, stretch out these muscles (10 minutes or so) before your workout, even doing some stretching in the hot tub.
- After your workout, let your muscles and your heart rate cool down with stretching or a quick gentle walk. Then, climb into the hot tub for complete relaxation and muscle recovery.

## **WILL A HOT TUB SOAK HELP IMPROVE MY SLEEP?**

According to the National Sleep Foundation, around 132 million Americans suffer from some type of sleep disorder at least one night per week. If you are one of these people research indicates that a 15 minute soak about 90 minutes before you go to bed will first raise your body's core temperature, and then cause a drop in body temperature

once you are out of the tub. This temperature drop tells your body it's time to sleep and may help lull you into a deeper and more restful shut-eye.

## **CAN A HOT TUB HELP WITH MY OVERALL WELL-BEING?**

Dopamine is released as we settle into the hot tub water, immediately sending our bodies and minds into a state of relaxation with less stress and less anxiety. It's also the perfect time to unplug from our chaotic world! Instead of staring at screens, use this hot tub soak to look at the stars or connect with loved ones in this relaxing setting. This disconnection from the world and connection back to yourself is powerful for your health.

## **HOW LONG IN THE HOT TUB FOR ALL THESE GREAT BENEFITS?**

Your length of hot tub soak is completely up to you! However, a study conducted by Washington State University's Bruce Becker, M.O., showed that soaking in a 102°F tub for 25 minutes produced relaxation and an accompanying decrease in anxiety.



# HOW HOT SHOULD A HOT TUB BE?

You know a hot tub is hot, but how hot is a hot tub supposed to be? Let's find out more about temperature safety, as well as a wide-ranging overview of other hot tub safety tips.

## WHAT TEMPERATURE SHOULD A HOT TUB BE?

Let's jump right in (no pun intended) with a recommendation. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advocates that hot tubs not exceed 104° F (40° C). Luckily, new hot tubs usually have a controller to prevent the hot tub temperature from exceeding this temperature. If you have an older tub without this limit, it's up to you to ensure you don't exceed it. Either way, whether it's a new or old model, keep a separate hot tub thermometer on hand to quickly and easily

confirm your spa's temperature. It's also a great heads-up to know if something is wrong with your heated water before you get in.

## **HOW HOT SHOULD A HOT TUB BE FOR YOU?**

Just like your thermostat, temperature preferences may be completely different from person to person. It's recommended that you start off at the average normal body temperature, 98.6°F (37°C) and if it's too cold, slowly increase the temperature until you're comfortable. Truly, the best way to find your perfect temperature is to play around with different degrees (below the restricted limit) and see what works best for you. And, while we always think about hot tubs on cold days, a cooler soak (85°F / 29°C or so) is nice on summer days when the sun is hot! Read our article about using your hot tub as a cool pool [here](#).

## **WHO SHOULD NOT USE A HOT TUB?**

Children don't have the same heat tolerance as adults since their smaller bodies and thinner skin make them more susceptible to heat. This is why the CDC prohibits infants using a hot tub AND strongly recommends that kids under the age of five stay out of hot tubs.

Older children should be limited to soak time at temperatures above 100 degrees Fahrenheit, and should avoid full immersion. A timer could be used to ensure a proper limit is met. Be sure to consult your health-care provider before you use a hot tub, especially if you have a heart condition, high blood pressure, diabetes, or other serious illnesses, or are (or may be) pregnant.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF YOUR HOT TUB IS TOO HOT?

You never want your body temperature to reach or exceed 103°F (39°C), since you will put yourself in danger of developing several conditions related to hyperthermia (excessively high body temperature), including:

- Heat rash
- Heat stroke
- Heat cramps
- Heat exhaustion

*The risk is even higher for older folks, very young children, pregnant women, and those with chronic illness.*

## DOES TEMPERATURE MAKE A DIFFERENCE ON HOW LONG YOU CAN STAY IN A HOT TUB?

Even if you're in overall good health, spending long periods of time in hot water can be dangerous. Talk with your doctor about what's safest for you and limit your hot tub temperature and soaking time according to this recommendation. We generally recommend keeping your hot tub soaks to 30 minutes or less.

## WHAT SHOULD THE HOT TUB TEMPERATURE BE WHEN NOT IN USE?

If you want to conserve energy costs, don't assume lowering the hot tub temperature will work. In fact, if you use your hot tub regularly and lower the temperature setting between each use, you might actually be increasing your energy costs!



Reheating the tub is hard work for your spa. It's harder to raise the temperature than to maintain it, so avoid putting extra stress on your hot tub's heating element.

If you live in a cold climate, it is a good idea to never turn off your hot tub in the winter. That's because freezing water may lead to burst pipes, damaged hardware, and other major damage. If you are leaving your home for the entire winter, talk to a professional about winterizing your hot tub.

## **ESTABLISHING SAFETY RULES FOR YOUR HOT TUB**

Since we have covered temperature safety recommendations, this is also a great time to talk about other safety rules. You should make sure that the safety rules for your hot tub are clearly stated and provided to everyone who is in charge of/visiting your hot tub. Here is a list of comprehensive safety rules, leveraged and summarized from WebMD that you may want to incorporate into your own list:

- The hot tub can only be used under supervision.
- No alcohol in the hot tub (including before or during the soak) since alcohol increases the risk of passing out, heart attack, or injury from passing out and falling.
- Be mindful of medicine. If you are taking medicine, talk to your doctor about using them with a hot tub. Prescription and over-the-counter medicines can sometimes cause drowsiness or other side effects.
- Prioritize drain safety. Make sure your drains are completely up to date with the law or code specifications to prevent hair and/or body parts from getting sucked in.

- Establish storm protocol. Never use the hot tub before, during, or after a thunderstorm since there is an electrocution danger from lightning.
- Have an emergency plan. Know where all electrical switches and circuit breakers for spa equipment and lights are located and how to turn them off in an emergency. Learn how to perform CPR and keep a first aid kit close by.
- Maintain inspections. Have your hot tub inspected for electrical hazards and upgrade all systems according to local codes and the National Electrical Code.
- Respect electricity. Use battery-operated appliances instead of cord-connected appliances in and around the spa.
- Prevent infections. Treat and change hot tub water frequently and ask people to shower before the tub to keep the water clean.
- Use spa covers. These protect children from danger, save energy, and keep debris out of the spa.
- Educate children about dangers with some basic safety rules:
  - No coming near the drains and no touching them
  - No "hold your breath underwater" game
  - No pretend screaming for help (false alarms) that might mask a real emergency
  - No running, diving, jumping, or pushing near the hot tub
  - No playing on top of the hot tub cover

Above all, remember that safety rules are designed to create a safe and relaxing hot tub experience for you, your family, and your guests.

# WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SALT WATER HOT TUBS?

If you have never heard about salt water hot tubs, you are in for a treat! Not only are these tubs incredibly restorative and rejuvenating, salt water hot tubs are an ideal solution for people that are sensitive to chemical products used in traditional hot tubs. Plus, they're great for people that want to spend more time enjoying their tubs and less time maintaining them. In this section, we will discuss everything you need to know about these unique hot tubs.

## WHAT HOT TUB WATER TREATMENT SYSTEM WILL WORK BEST FOR ME?

Before we get into salt water tubs more specifically, here are the most common ways to maintain spa water:

### **Chlorine**

A chlorine formula (especially formulated for hot tubs) helps cleanse impurities from the water. Chlorine oxidizes contaminants, invading them and destroying them from the inside out. As it works, the chlorine dissipates and turns into a waste product called chloramines. These remnants are responsible for the "stinging and drying" reputation chlorine has and reduce the sanitizer's effectiveness. Chlorine must be added on a regular basis to keep chloramines at bay.

## **Bromine**

As a popular choice for hot tubs, this chemical ionizes contaminants, forcing apart their chemical bonds. A good amount of it remains active and working, even after combining with contaminants. Bromine also produces a waste product called bromamines that are not as noxious as chloramines, but they too still reduce the effectiveness of the bromine in your hot tub, requiring regular water care maintenance.

### **Chlorine vs. Bromine at a Quick Glance:**

Here are the major considerations between Chlorine- and Bromine-based water treatment systems:

#### ***Effectiveness***

Chlorine kills contaminants more quickly than bromine does. However, bromine has a lower pH than chlorine, so it can help keep your overall water chemistry more balanced, which means less adjusting and maintenance for you!

#### ***Stability***

Chlorine dissipates more quickly than bromine, so chlorine needs to be replaced more often. Bromine kills bacteria in your spa for a longer period of time than chlorine. but it's important to note that ultraviolet (UV) light can destroy bromine faster than chlorine, so be sure to use your hot tub cover for outdoor spas.

#### ***Your health***

Chlorine can be harsher on the skin, hair and eyes than bromine, but bromine can be a bit more difficult to wash off. If you have sensitive skin or have respiratory issues, bromine will be a better choice than chlorine. Bromine, however, has a distinctive "aroma" that many users find distasteful.

## Salt Water Sanitization

These systems automatically generate natural chlorine sanitizer from salt added to the water. This system allows you to add fewer bottled products to the water and enjoy better water quality with less maintenance, and avoids much of the harsh side effects of chemical-based water care. In addition, the water has a much softer feel, and the skin-drying characteristics of manufactured chlorine are eliminated.

## Ozone System/Ozonator

What is ozone?

The ozone works to breakdown radical contaminants in your hot tub water such as soap, body lotion, and oil. The best way to make your tub a safe place is to always shower BEFORE you get in your hot tub!

What is an ozonator for a hot tub?

An ozonator is an electrically powered device that helps reduce the need for chlorine by generating a high concentration of ozone that thoroughly cleans spa water on contact, and this water system is known by many different names depending on the brand. An ozonator works in conjunction with the chosen hot tub sanitizer system, whether it's salt water-based, chlorine-based, or a bromine-based hot tub system. Ozonators work by splitting oxygen atoms that collide and create ozone.

- **Benefits of ozonators:** It is an assistant disinfectant.
- **Disadvantages of ozonators:** It can reduce the life of your hot tub cover and it requires additional electricity to run beyond your hot tubs energy usage, especially since most ozonator manufacturers recommend that you run your ozonator as much as 24 hours a day for best results. And, due to ozone's very short half-life in hot water, it cannot do the job of sanitizing spa water all by itself.

## **WHY SHOULD I CONSIDER A SALT WATER HOT TUB?**

You've likely heard about the healing powers of natural hot springs, waters that draw their heat from beneath the earth's crust and provide their own natural cleansing and soothing properties. Since a natural hot spring is likely not close by, salt water hot tubs let you create this mineral spring oasis at home.

Have you ever taken an Epsom Salt bath? If you have, you know right away how effective these baths are for relaxing the body and relieving muscle tightness. This is also the same effect a salt water hot tub has. with the addition of powerful jets for a deep massage from your upper back to the soles of your feet.

In hot salt water, the water is denser than fresh water. making you more buoyant which further helps loosen muscles. Additionally, the National Strength and Conditioning Association reports that swelling and edema can be treated with hot and salt water therapy. How? Since salt water has a higher solute concentration than body fluids, the hot salt water can help open pores and pull fluids out of the skin caused from backup in swollen areas.

## **HOW DOES SALT WATER WORK COMPARED TO CHLORINE AND OTHER SYSTEMS? IS IT AS EFFECTIVE? BETTER?**

Salt water is its own natural sanitizer since it is a natural inhibitor of bacteria, meaning it needs less additives in the water. such as added chlorine and bromine. Salt water is gentle on the eyes, nose and skin, especially since salt is actually a common skin-softening ingredient in

skin products. And, without the skin irritation or the smell associated with chlorine, the hot water soak can be much more enjoyable.

Salt water hot tubs are also easier to maintain than chlorine and bromine-based systems. The scientific explanation is that, in salt water hot tubs, a chemical reaction produces small amounts of natural chlorine molecules. These molecules neutralize contaminants before being recycled back into the system as sodium, rather than as chloramines (which produce a strong chlorine smell and can potentially irritate skin and eyes). With just a little salt in your spa water, the system automatically generates chlorine, so you'll spend less time measuring and adding chemicals. To further enhance hassle-free water care maintenance, advanced spas let you monitor the sanitizing system via an intuitive control panel removing any guesswork about what's needed.

As an environmental bonus to your minimal maintenance schedule, salt water hot tubs allow you to conserve water by reducing spa drain and refills to potentially once a year, where standard hot tubs need to be drained/refilled 3-4 times a year. Lastly, with a salt water hot tub, you will purchase less water-sanitizing chemicals throughout the year as compared to a standard hot tub water care system, which helps offset the up-front cost of the salt water system.

## **IS SALT WATER CLOUDIER OR CLEARER THAN OTHER HOT TUB WATER TREATMENT SYSTEMS?**

With fewer additives and less chemicals, the spa water stays cleaner longer with a salt water hot tub! The small amount of chlorine regularly produced by the system is enough to keep you, water quality clean and clear, and always ready for a relaxing soak. As mentioned earlier, you will achieve clear water with a salt water tub with much less main-

tenance than a chemically treated tub, not to mention you should only need to drain/refill your salt water hot tub once a year.

**If your water is cloudy, and it's been less than 12 months, it's good to do some investigating:**

If you can't pinpoint the problem, call your hot tub retailer and troubleshoot the issue to find the solution, but as a general rule, salt water tubs should be much easier to maintain clear water than chemically treated tubs.

- How are the filters looking; do they need to be cleaned?
- Have you had a high volume of bathers for consecutive months that are causing a spike in excessive oils and/or organic matter?
- Is the tub fully up-to-date on water care maintenance?

## **IS A SALT WATER HOT TUB SYSTEM HEALTHIER FOR MY FAMILY?**

If your family is sensitive to chemically treated tubs, then a salt water hot tub will be a better choice for your household. As mentioned before, some chemical-based water quality care systems can feel harsh to the skin, have a stronger smell, and irritate the eyes. Salt water tubs, in comparison, have such a minimal release of chlorine from a salt water system that you won't be able to smell or otherwise detect it. And with less chemical irritants, you'll be able to comfortably use your tub as often as you want. While it's certainly a matter of preference and personal sensitivity to chemicals, salt water tubs are universally gentler for





your family. And with less time maintaining your tub, you'll have a lot more quality family time to enjoy this new hot tub.

## **WHAT IS THE INITIAL & ONGOING COST OF A SALT WATER SYSTEM COMPARED TO A CHEMICALLY TREATED HOT TUB?**

As a general blanket statement, a salt water system will cost you more initially than a chemical water system due to its technological advancements, functionality, and improved overall spa experience. In terms of ongoing maintenance, a salt water hot tub will be easier and more cost-effective to own than a chemically treated tub.

However, the exact price of the water system is dependent on the make and model of your desired hot tub. The best way to determine the cost comparisons between a salt water system and a chemically treated system is to visit your hot tub retailer and talk it through.

## **HOW EASY IS A SALT WATER HOT TUB TO MAINTAIN COMPARED TO A NON-SALT HOT TUB?**

When it comes to salt water vs. chlorine water treatment for hot tubs, salt water hot tubs win hands down! With less water care maintenance, less required products, and once a year draining/refilling your hot tub, a salt water tub is much easier to maintain than a traditional hot tub.



# HOW DO I DECIDE WHAT KIND OF HOT TUB IS BEST FOR ME?

Beyond the hot tub model itself, there are so many important considerations to factor in when finding the hot tub that is exactly right for you! The good news is this "narrowing down" process is much easier than you think when you focus on a few key areas. Let's get started.

## WHAT ARE THE HOT TUB FEATURES I NEED?

Before you start looking at specific hot tub models and price tags, first envision what your ideal hot tub looks like and what it does. This will immediately help you get together a quick short list of what hot tubs could work. Consider some of these questions to help you form a more concrete vision of your perfect hot tub:

### **How Will Your Hot Tub Be Used?**

If you are looking for a spa for some great hydrotherapy, you are going to want to zero in on the kind of jets and whirlpool capabilities of various tubs. And pay close attention to the adjustable jets. The more options you have for adjusting the direction and strength of water jets, the better your hot tub will be for your needs.

### **How Often Will It Be Used?**

If you want to use your hot tub every day, energy efficiency will be one of your top priorities.

### **How Many People Will Use It?**

Your tub should be the tight size for the number of people who will use it frequently. Even if you just have a few people in your family, are

you planning to throw frequent hot tub parties? You'll want to think ahead here.

## **And, How Tall Is Everyone?**

As a general rule, spa seats are usually designed for people of average height and weight. If you're petite, you may have to sit on the edge of the seat or bob up and down to keep your head above water. If you are tall, you may need to slouch to keep your shoulders submerged. A "test drive" at your spa dealer is very important because it ensures a comfortable fit before you make a big investment.

### **As a quick overview, answer these questions about your space.**

- Does your hot tub fit into the space with enough access to all sides for maintenance or repairs?
- Could it be physically delivered to the site? Your route plan is very important; and we can help.
- Do you have the right 'foundation' to support the weight? (Your base, or deck, should have at least 125 lbs. per square foot load capacity.)
- If it's outdoors, is it easily accessible in all seasons? Is there a logical place to drain the hot tub?
- If it's indoors, do you have the proper ventilation systems and flooring in place?
- Does your home have adequate electrical service to support the new hot tub?

## HOW DO I CHOOSE THE RIGHT HOT TUB FOR MY HOME?

A scaled drawing of your preferred location can be very useful in your buying process. Pictures of potential locations will allow seasoned experts to advise you. (High quality dealers have backyard advisors who will come to your home at no charge to assist.)

Yes, it's a lot of questions, and our separate article on hot tub site planning tips can help simplify this planning and preparation for you.

## WHAT KIND OF HOT TUB IS BEST FOR ME FROM A MAINTENANCE PERSPECTIVE?

The amount of maintenance for your hot tub is completely dependent on the type of hot tub you purchase. As a very brief overview, you will have these items on your to-do list:

- **Hot tub water care:** As little as 5 minutes each week
- **Hot tub filter care:** As little as 15 minutes each month
- **Draining and refilling the hot tub:** As little as 1 time each year with a salt water system (3-4 times each year with traditional water care)
- **Winterizing your hot tub:** If needed, recommended to be done by trained professional

For a full scope of your hot tub maintenance chores, check out our hot tub maintenance article that goes into everything you need to know in finer detail.

# WHAT KIND OF HOT TUB IS BEST FOR ME AND MY BUDGET?

There are so many hot tub choices on the market today; our blog is a helpful reference. As a brief summary, many important things determine the cost of a hot tub:

- Size
- Features
- Accessories
- Warranty
- Design
- Engineering & Quality
- Geographic location
- Water system (salt water vs. chemically treated tubs)

As you want more from a hot tub in terms of functionality and features, the price will go up. Below are the general price ranges of hot tubs:

#	Hot Tub Category	Starting Price Range	Vendor
1	Entry Level	\$4,000 to \$10,000	Fantasy Spas
2	Value-Priced	\$7,000 to \$14,000	Hot Spot Spas
3	Premium	\$10,000 to \$18,000	Hot Spring Lime-light Series
4	Luxury	\$13,000 to \$20,000+	Hot Spring Highlife Series

It's important to remember that higher-end hot tubs are likely to be more expensive at time of purchase, yet can save money during the lifespan of your ownership. Hot tubs with energy-efficient design and features, better construction, superior insulation (which significantly reduce heating costs) and high quality parts, such as an energy-efficient heater, last longer and cost less to own. Since short-and long-term ownership costs of hot tubs are not easily captured online, you should encourage your hot tub retailer to talk about costs and benefits in depth as you compare different hot tubs at different price points. Ask any dealer for an Energy Cost Guarantee which holds the local dealer directly accountable for a salesperson's representations concerning ownership costs. And, don't forget to discuss financing options with your local dealer as they likely can make your budget and hot tub wish list align with an acceptable payment option.

## **HOW DO I CHOOSE THE RIGHT HOT TUB? CAN I DO THIS ALL ONLINE?**

While it's great to do some initial homework online to get to know the hot tubs generally, you will be best served by visiting a hot tub retailer for everything you need to know. Ergonomic seating is so personal (and important to long-term comfort) that it requires you to see these tubs in person. Hydrotherapy options vary dramatically from model to model, so the smartest shoppers want to feel the jet action of any hot tub they might own. An in-store visit allows you to discuss the hot tub options in light of your wants and needs and home set-up, and get expert advice to lead you to the right decision. Importantly, you can even try out some hot tubs, too.

We think consumers are best served by not buying a hot tub online. This is a huge investment, and you want to be fully educated on this decision and be 100% satisfied with your selection. You also need a

qualified hot tub dealer for future service questions, repairs, and warranty issues. Local warranty coverage is imperative in order to protect your investment., and we recommend you check any company's service reputation by getting references and checking online reviews.





# HOT TUB PLACEMENT PLANNING AND SITE PREPARATION TIPS

You may already know that you want a hot tub, but you'll need to do some thoughtful planning and preparation first. The good news is, you can work with your hot tub dealer to help you do that. In the meantime, let's answer some of the most frequently asked questions about hot tub site placement and site preparation planning here.

## **SHOULD I CONTACT MY LOCAL PLANNING DEPARTMENT?**

A quick call to your Town's planning office would be useful; most municipalities are happy to learn about the standard cover locks in every WaterTree hot tub.

### **Do I Need a Building Permit?**

Most cities and counties require permits for exterior construction and electrical circuits. Check in with your local planning department to see if a building permit is required specifically for hot tub installation.

### **Do I Need a Fence or a Gate Around My Hot Tub?**

Consult your local or county building codes to determine the need for a fence or gate since some communities have codes requiring residential barriers {i.e. fences, self-closing gates) on the property to prevent unsupervised access to a hot tub by children under the age of five.

# WHAT IS NEEDED TO PREPARE MY HOME FOR A HOT TUB?

In determining where your hot tub will have, you need to decide if you have enough space, which will largely be determined by the hot tub specifications of your desired hot tub. However, the tub site itself is only one small piece of the puzzle, as you'll need to consider other factors such as:

## Spa Access

For both indoor and outdoor installation AND routine maintenance and repairs, you need to allow access to all aides of the hot tub. Serviceable equipment can be located anywhere in the cabinet, so it's essential to have the ability to remove all the panels. Additionally, if you are planning on surrounding the tub in a deck. you'll need to install hatches or a crawl space around the spa, providing 18" - 24" of space for a full.grown adult to access the inside of the tub.

## Nearby Drainage Site

Some cleaning systems require draining up to 500 gallons from the tub every 3-4 months, so you need a proper drainage spot nearby, unless this is specifically outlined in your city regulations. If you are draining onto your property, note that while most plant life tolerates treated hot tub water with no chlorine content, avoid delicate plants like roses or vegetables.

## Site Access

Can you ensure the hot tub can be physically delivered to the spa destination at your property? If you know the specific hot tub that you want, get the dimensions of the delivered package from the manufacturer. Your mission is to now evaluate the delivery route. Armed with a tape measure, walk the actual path that the tub will travel and identify any trouble spots like low eaves, air conditioner units, gas/water me-

ters, overhanging branches, narrow gates, consecutive stairs without landings, or anything difficult to maneuver around or over.

In your route, measure the width of doors, gates, steps and sidewalks to make sure the hot tub can get through on the day of delivery, paying close attention to any 90° turns to make sure it clears. If you will need to remove gates or parts of fences, do it in advance. These are all hiccups you do not want on delivery day, so do your homework ahead of time!

If you live on a hillside or difficult site, inquire about crane services to lift the spa over walls and other obstructions.

## **WHAT ABOUT ELECTRICAL AND PLUMBING NEEDS?**

### **Electrical**

You will need an electrician to come to your house to verify your set-up can support a hot tub and ensure the right components, parts, and wiring are in place. You'll also need to know how far apart your main breaker box will be to your hot tub location; the further away it is, the more expensive it will be to wire it. As a general rule of thumb, all spas must be connected to a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI). It is critical safety device shuts off power if an electrical short arises in as little as 1/40th of a second. Additionally, you should talk to your hot tub dealer and brush up on the National Electrical Code to make sure you know what you need before an electrician comes to your property. And, always remember, extension cords can never be used for your hot tub.

## **Plumbing**

You won't need plumbing since your hot tub is entirely self-contained! You will fill it using a garden hose and empty it via siphon with garden hose or submersible pump.

## **WHAT KIND OF FOUNDATION DO I NEED?**

The sole purpose of a foundation is to support your tub. First, look at the weight of the actual hot tub itself. Can the outside foundation, deck, patio, or floor room support this massive weight even when it's unfilled? Now, it's time for the water. The floor load of a hot tub filled with water is around 115 lbs. per square foot. Your base should have at least 125 lbs. per square foot load capacity.



## Do's of Foundations

- Hot tubs must be placed on a solid, uniform, level surface. These adequate foundations are things like concrete floors, compacted crushed stone base, and decks/patios (if they are structurally sound to hold it). A hot tub must rest completely flush with its foundation. This hot tub foundation must easily hold the tub, the water, and bathers.
- Place the tub on an elevated foundation so that water drains away from it.

## Don'ts of foundations

- Hot tubs should never be placed on bare ground or grass.
- Don't ever attempt to hand level or manipulate the hot tub onto a foundation if it is not naturally flush on the floor; this may crack your hot tub shell or cause other internal damage. And, damage caused by inadequate or improper foundation support is not covered by any manufacturer's warranty, and you will be completely responsible for the damages incurred.



- View and privacy: Picture yourself in your hot tub. What view do you want? Is it private enough?
- Proximity to trees and plants: They are pretty, but how much leaves and debris could they drop into your hot tub in this spot?
- Adequate drainage for rainwater & splash out: Where will the water go?
- Nearby water source: You'll want this close by to fill and drain the hot tub with a garden hose.
- Utility lines: DO NOT place your hot tub directly under or within 12 feet of overhead power, telephone or cable lines.
- Climate matters: In cold weather climates where the ground is covered in deep snow, how close can you get your tub to your house door for convenient access? In hot climates, is your tub in a good shady spot? Will a gazebo be needed?
- Create a clean path to the hot tub: This is a great way to keep your tub free from dirt and debris!

## **CAN I REINFORCE AN EXISTING STRUCTURE AND PLACE IT THERE? OR, WILL I BUILD SOMETHING NEW FOR MY HOT TUB?**

If you are not comfortable with your foundation or if you are unsure if your foundation can support a hot tub, you'll definitely want to consult with a structural engineer or qualified contractor to have it inspected and add bracing if necessary. Some dealers have personnel on their staff who can inspect your structure and give you feedback.

## OUTSIDE HOT TUBS: SHOULD I PLACE A HOT TUB ON A DECK? ON A PATIO? WHAT IS BEST?

It is wonderful to have an outside hot tub to enjoy year-round! Here are some considerations to map out.

## INSIDE HOT TUBS: CAN I PUT A HOT TUB IN MY BASEMENT? BATH?

If you are considering placing a hot tub indoors, most regular, code-compliant floors or level basement concrete are adequate to support the weight. You will need to consult with a professional contractor regarding four-season rooms, screened-in rooms, and porches to see if they have adequate floor support. **A few things to keep in mind:**

Place it on ceramic tile or water-resistant floor material and extend this material at least 2 feet around the hot tub in case of over splash and to catch water from bathers exiting the hot tub. Do not put your tub directly on household carpet or a wood floor

- Adequate ventilation: This is a must! When the hot tub cover is off and it is in use, there is a considerable amount of humidity and moisture in the air, which can damage walls, ceilings, carpeting, draperies and furniture. As a solution, install a ventilation exhaust fan either above the hot tub in the ceiling or in a side wall or window, next to and above the heated hot tub water. It's also smart to include a humidistat that will automatically turn on the exhaust fan when moisture is present.
- Exhaust fans are rated by CFMs {cubic feet per minute) and the fan must be powerful enough to remove all the air in the room in 3 minutes. To help determine what size fan you will need, measure the room's length x width x height and divide by 3 = CFMs.

- Include a waterproof, non-skid floor with a drain
- Install a waterproofing vapor barrier for wood studs/rafters
- Ideally, have tile or cedar planks for the walls and ceilings

## **PLAN THE DELIVERY AND INSTALLATION OF YOUR HOT TUB.**

Now that you have everything figured out and planned, work directly with your hot tub dealer to purchase the hot tub and coordinate logistics around delivery and installation.





# WHAT ARE THE TOP TEN TIPS ON HOW TO BUY A HOT TUB?

Buying a new hot tub has never been so simple or easy to do! We've put together our top ten hot tub buying tips here.

## 1. DEFINE YOUR TOP HOT TUB BENEFITS

This is the best part! Whether you are looking for hydromassage, pain relief for sore muscles, entertainment, relaxation, or all of the above, your hot tub should deliver everything you want. If certain priorities are more important to you than others (i.e. jet power, lighting options), this is great to clearly define as you evaluate various hot tub options.

## 2. UNDERSTAND YOUR PERFECT FIT - LITERALLY!

You'll want an idea of how big you need your hot tub to be, factoring in not only your immediate household, but also how often you'll have guests pop by for a dip! And, you may be surprised to learn how much your height (and other frequent bathers) will matter, since the seat set-up may be very different for petite or tall individuals. The best way to see if a hot tub fits is to sit in it before you buy. Go visit your hot tub dealer and take a seat in various tubs to see what feels right.

## 3. PICK A HOT TUB LOCATION AT YOUR HOME

Where will your hot tub go? Pick a couple ideal spots and figure out if it's feasible. Most importantly, you need to measure! Determine if this

can live in this spot (with enough clearance for maintenance) and if it can even make the delivery path to get there!

If you, tub will be outdoors, look around you. Is it a pretty and private view? Is it away from trees and plants that can put a lot of debris in the tub? Is it near a water source? Does it have an ample spot for drainage? If you are in a cold climate, is it near the house door? If you live in a hot spot, will this be shady enough?

If your tub will live indoors, you'll be needing proper exhaust and flooring.

And inside or outside, you'll soon need to get into the nitty gritty details like proper foundation and electrical components which your hot tub dealer can help talk you through to determine if this spot truly is the one!

## **4. CONSIDER YOUR OVERALL BUDGET AND THINK LONG-TERM**

A hot tub cost is going to factor in three distinct things:

- The purchase price of the hot tub
- The cost of installing the hot tub
- The ongoing costs of the hot tub

Our 40+ years selling and servicing hot tubs has led to our most important piece of advice: look beyond the initial purchase price. What hot tub is going to be the best for you over the course of its life-time in terms of maintenance costs? If a more expensive energy-efficient hot tub can save you money down the road, this is something you need to evaluate as you look at sticker prices. Talk to the hot tub dealer about

the considerations behind the price tag, including energy costs (especially if you want to use your tub daily), maintenance, repairs, parts, and warranties.

## **5. COMPARE AND CONTRAST SEVERAL HOT TUBS**

To really see what a hot tub is made of, you're going to want to consider everything. It's critical to compare the features, the engineering {i.e. better insulation = cheaper heating costs}, the functionality, and maintenance. Whether you put together a comparison spreadsheet or have your hot tub dealer help you with this, you want to clearly see the differences of the hot tub-& to give you a deeper understanding of the better choices for you.

## **6. CLEARLY DEFINE YOUR ONGOING HOT TUB MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS**

The amount of maintenance you will need to do for your hot tub is completely dependent on the type of hot tub you purchase. If you have an ideal maintenance timeframe in mind, this is important to clarify. As an example, if you are someone that wants to spend more time soaking than maintaining, different model-& or different water systems (integrated salt water sanitization, for instance) will make more sense for you!

## **7. FIND A REPUTABLE HOT TUB DEALER**

Since this hot tub purchase is a huge investment, find the right hot tub retailer. Make sure they have been in business for a while, have good

customer reviews, are fully up to speed on all things hot tubs, provide comprehensive information and training from non-commissioned sales staff, AND want to help you find the best spa for you over simply making a sale!

## **8. NARROW YOUR FOCUS WITH A VISIT TO THE DEALERSHIP (AND TEST THE TUB!)**

Armed with all this hot tub information you just compiled in this checklist, it's time to visit your hot tub dealership! See the tubs, talk about the tubs, ask questions, discuss the hot tub destination at your home, dive into pricing (short- and long-term pros and cons of different models), and talk financing. This should narrow down your final choices to a few top contenders, and now it's time to test them out. This is the best way to determine if this hot tub is the winner; always enjoy the test drive before you buy!

## **9. FINALIZE THE LAST DETAILS OF YOUR HOT TUB PURCHASE**

After you've picked what hot tub you want to buy, it's time to start negotiating and talking details. Are there some free accessories or products that can be included into the deal? This is also when you should discuss delivery, installation costs, and financing. And, most importantly, think long-term. Ask about the fine print of your warranty and how future ongoing service is handled. This all will matter later, and you'll be so happy you covered this now.

## 10. TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOUR HOT TUB!

Before you leave the dealership, make sure you are crystal clear on the maintenance requirements of your hot tub! You will need to balance the water on schedule, maintain your filters (cleaning or replacing) when needed, drain/fill your tub as required, and make any needed repairs right away. This hot tub is a lifestyle investment; take great care of it so you can enjoy it for many years to come.

### Are You Ready to Buy a Hot Tub?

At WaterTree, we are ready to help you start up this process! Whether you want to discuss more about what it's like to own a hot tub, get a feel for options and costs, or get ready to make a purchase, we are here for whatever stage you are in. Give us a call, email us, or drop by our Rapid City or Spearfish, SD showroom. We are always ready to give you all the details you need to make the right hot tub decision.



# ABOUT WATERTREE

## SERVING THE BLACK HILLS SINCE 1939

1939. Yep, that's when it all began for us. Just a little water treatment business in the middle of the United States. Back when Franklin D Roosevelt was President, milk cost 49 cents and televisions started selling for the first time in America.

Skip ahead 2 decades and a young man by the name of Darrell (Robbie) Robinson traveled from Chicago, Illinois to Rapid City to run this growing water treatment business and raise his family. In 1956 WaterTree Inc. opened our sister company, The Pool & Spa Center. Over the past few decades we have remained family-owned and are now operated by the third generation.

As a company we have grown and moved around town, survived the 1972 flood and have still continued to serve our customers with the same standards and customer service as when we began back over 80 years ago.

From all of us at WaterTree, we strive to take care of our customers the best way we know how and to offer the highest quality products at a reasonable price. We carry Hot Spring spas because we feel that they are superior quality and are innovators in their industry backed by exceptional customer service.