

Maintain that Spa or Shut it off?

I often hear questions about how a tub that is not being used regularly should be treated.

1. Should I continue to maintain the chemistry?
2. Should I shut it down?
3. If it's not running, should I empty it?

These questions are easily answered...

If you are using your tub a few times a month, then maintaining it during the periods of non-use is best and least expensive. As long as you keep your chemistry in balance and the sanitizer at the proper level, then the tub will be easy to maintain with very little action on your part. I would suggest a once a week tub-side checkup, just to be sure that nothing is out of balance and the water is clean, clear and odor free. As long as the spa is covered and there is no dirt, leaves, rainwater or other sources of organic matter getting in, the water will pretty much hold a balance until the next time you use it. If you are going to seeing even less time in your tub, like weeks of non-use, then it would likely be to your advantage to shut it down, until you need it again. You can keep the water in the tub and shut it down for weeks at a time, but you need to occasionally operate the pump(s) to keep seals working properly.

If you plan a long period of non-use, more than a month, then it would be best to shut down and drain the tub with proper cleaning and treatment prior to doing so. Never shutdown and leave a tub full and dirty as this will make the cleanup process much more difficult and usually lead to severe problems with bacteria buildup. It is very important, prior to emptying your tub, to make sure the tub and internal plumbing are clean. While it is pretty easy to clean the shell, it is not as simple to clean the jets or plumbing. There are a number of spa plumbing flush products designed to assist you in the cleaning process. Be sure the one you choose is compatible with the sanitizing system you use. They all work toward the goal of removing bio-film, dirt, scale and other residual buildup that would otherwise provide a place to harbor bacteria. These cleaning products involve adding the recommended dosage to the water prior to draining for a pre-determined period during which you run the jets and insure all plumbing is exposed to the cleaner to remove any buildup. The filter cartridge is usually removed prior to this treatment to insure the filter does not become excessively clogged with the resulting waste. Once the cleaning cycle is completed, shut

off the spa at the GFCI breaker and drain as directed in your spa manual. It is best to have a wet/dry vacuum available to remove any leftover dirty water from the plumbing through each jet and to insure that no water is left standing in the lines to stagnate. Be sure to clean behind all pillows, inside the filter area and around the bottom suction fittings. Remove any fittings you can to inspect for debris like hair, lint, hair ties, etc. It is also a good idea to loosen the inlet union for the pump(s) and inspect for any debris possibly stuck in the inlet or impeller. Little toys and other small debris can definitely cause problems with flow and even damage the equipment. Doing this also insures that no water is left standing in the pump. If you reside in an area where freezing is an issue, then it is very important to eliminate water standing in plumbing lines to prevent ice from cracking or splitting lines or damaging equipment. Wipe everything down including your spa's cover both top and the underside to insure that no bacteria is left to grow during the downtime. Be sure to thoroughly wash your filter cartridge and leave it out to dry. Cover your spa and you are done. You can opt to further spoil your tub with a nice shell rub down with spa suitable wax-on/wax-off products as well as spa cover treatments to reduce damage from weather and sun. Don't forget the siding, especially if it's wood. a yearly treatment of the wood with boiled linseed oil will keep the wood in good condition and lasting a lifetime.

Happy tubbing!