



# Hot Tub 101: What you need to know before purchasing a hot tub

The question we are asked the most frequently by our clients is: "What should I look for when choosing my spa?" After reading this article, you will have confidence in your ability to select a high quality hot tub that suits your preferences, without sacrificing value or service.

## **The Exterior Factors**

### **Where should I place my hot tub?**

Placement is generally determined by the space available. However, consider the weight of a hot tub and the water it will hold when it is full. With each litre weighing 1kg, an average 1500L hot tub will hold 1500kg of water (and we haven't even considered the tub or the bathers yet). Make sure that if you are choosing a placement on a raised surface that it is safely reinforced to accommodate this weight. Secondly, think about the distance from your spa to your home, if your hot tub will be outdoors. We recommend 10-15 footsteps away from the nearest door, as winter hot tub-ing can be very chilly on the way to or from the warmth of your spa.

### **What should I take into account when choosing my spa's size and configuration?**

The dimensions of your spa are very important. Different models within each brand will give you several choices in size. This choice is personal, and sometimes difficult to narrow down. You can at least eliminate the non-contenders by asking yourself these questions: How many people will be using the spa regularly? Would you like to entertain guests in your spa? Are there children or older people who will need ease of access to be considered? How much room are you dedicating to your hot tub footprint? Are there regular bathers who prefer to recline in a lounge? Are there certain parts of your body that need the hydrotherapy most?

### **What do I need to consider about the Finish of my hot tub?**

High quality hot tubs are made of cast acrylic sheets that resist weathering, UV radiation, staining and scratching. High gloss versus a textured finish is a matter of taste rather than durability. The cabinet needs to be constructed from material that resists warping, and fading in order to minimize maintenance and maintain a high quality appearance over time, while adding to the insulation of your spa.

### **How many jets should my hot tub have and how big should they be?**

Jets are designed for their massaging ability. Different jets and jet placements provide a different massage effect. Generally, larger jets provide a deeper muscle massage where smaller jets give a more topical stimulation. Look for a spa with variety in the jet size, style, and placement, as different seats' jet combinations will provide you with a unique massage.

**Good to Know Fact:** *There is an important balance between the pumps and jetting in your new spa.* Jets are engineered to operate properly when the correct amount of water is flowing through them. Smaller jets require less flow and therefore more of them can be used with a pump of the same power. A spa with more jets does not guarantee a more enjoyable hydrotherapy experience; unless the pump configuration can support them in number or power.

### **What do I need to consider about my hot tub cover?**

Your spa's thermal cover is what protects your investment of electrical heating in your tub. Look for high density foam inserts inside a marine-grade vinyl skin. Between these two layers should be a heavy vapour barrier that keeps the foam inserts dry and light. A tapered cover will be shaped similar to a roof, ensuring that any water falling onto your thermal cover will roll off instead of collect and cause a sag or bow in your cover over time. Make sure the cover has four or more lockable straps to hold your cover down – this is one important factor to meeting the City of Ottawa Bylaws without having to fully fence, gate, and lock your spa.

## **The Internal Factors**

### **What do I need to know about my hot tub's Jet Pumps?**

The size and number of pumps will dictate the configuration of the jets and water features that are possible. Having two or more jet pumps will let you to turn on half of the jets while the other half is off if you are only using half of the tub. Having a choice of multiple jet pump speeds will let you set your jets at the right intensity for your preference – too high or too low and your hydrotherapy experience will not be satisfying.

### **And what is a Circulation (Circ) Pump, anyways?**

A circulation pump is an extra smaller pump that will allow your new hot tub to run a filtration program without the jet pumps kicking in. Most hot tubs have programmable or continuous filtration; a circ pump can save wear and tear on your jet pumps, while minimizing the cost of circulating your hot tub's water for filtration.

### **How important is the Structure of my new hot tub?**

Like a home, a good foundation is necessary to a long and reliable lifespan of a hot tub. Especially in our climate, structural integrity is needed to carry the large weight of a hot tub, hundreds of litres of water, as well as bathers. All the structural components need to be impervious to weathering and rot. Inside the spa cabinet, the mechanical components also need to be protected from the elements.

### **What should I look for in my new spa's Insulation?**

As Canadians, we all know the importance of insulating properly. Trapped air space is as crucial to efficiency as is the insulation itself. Having every component that contains water

inside the insulated space provides the safest and most energy conserving operation of the hot tub. Having removable and replaceable water-proof insulation allows every component of your spas equipment and plumbing to be inspected and repaired when necessary, and protects the insulating properties of the material it is made of. The way a hot tub is insulated will have a direct effect on the cost of operations and ease of service and maintenance.

**Good to Know Fact:** *The Insulation is generally a more important factor than the Heater's power.* The balance of heater capacity and insulation are crucial to efficient operation of the hot tub. But bigger heaters require more power and are not necessarily better, where better quality insulation will increase your hot tubs efficiency immensely.

### **How important is a Canadian brand hot tub?**

It is very important to know that your hot tub has been designed and manufactured with Canadian weather in mind. We have a huge range in temperature and humidity over the course of a year. If a spa is not designed with this in mind, it may be susceptible to problems that aren't an issue in more temperate climates. Having an insulated hot tub can make the difference between a \$100 or \$1000 service call in mid-winter. Be sure you consider easy cabinet access panels, frame structure and insulation; these are possibly the most important factors to consider when choosing a brand you can trust.

## **The Maintenance Factors**

### **What do I need to consider about access to my hot tub plumbing and equipment?**

Ideally, you will leave access to every side of your spa. When decking around a spa to create a 'sunken' effect, we recommend that panels or trap doors are installed into the deck on each side of the hot tub for accessibility. Easily removable cabinet panels and insulation are the key to quick access and maintenance of the equipment and plumbing of your hot tub.

### **What about the Filtration of my spa water?**

Proper filtration is crucial to water hygiene. When the filtration system is designed appropriately for a hot tubs flow rate, it enhances water quality. The square foot capacity of a filter tells you the area of the filtration surface. A skim filter lets you worry less about anything floating on the surface of the spa water. A circulation pump is an option that will allow your new hot tub to run a filtration system without all of the jets kicking in. What many people are not told is that filters need regular rinsing and cleaning, so having easy access to your filters is very important.

### **Can you explain what a "salt water" hot tub is?**

**Any** tub can be a salt water hot tub. It is not the hot tub itself that is "salt water" – it is the sanitation system. This system can be used in any hot tub, provided there is room for it to be plumbed into the equipment under the cabinet, and that your spa is programmed for adequate

circulation. We recommend a circulation pump with this system for optimum performance. Salt generators (also called salt systems or bromine generators) convert bromide salt into active bromine to sanitize hot tub water. The amount of salt in the water is less salty than your tears and feels silky soft. The biggest advantage is that it will generate bromine all the time, at the specified level – there is no need to add chemical at regular intervals, like there is with traditional sanitization systems.

### What is a UV Sanitizer System?

Any hot tub can have a UV Sanitizer System plumbed into it, provided there is room for it to be plumbed into the equipment under the cabinet, and that your spa is programmed for adequate circulation. We recommend a circulation pump with this system for optimum performance. UV light inside the Sanitizer kills bacteria in the water as it flows past the bulb. The bulb will need to be changed every 1-2 years. The biggest advantage is that it will kill a large percentage of the bacteria in your spa – this generally reduces the amount of chemical that will need to be added at regular intervals.

### What is an Ozonator?

Any hot tub can have an Ozonator plumbed into it, and we recommend this option on any hot tub, with every sanitization system. Ozone is created when 3 molecules of oxygen are joined, instead of the regular two. These molecules are very good at oxidizing contaminants, reducing the odour caused by sanitizing chemicals ('pool smell'), and helping to kill bacteria, algae and yeasts. An Ozonator needs water flowing through it almost constantly to keep the level of ozonation high enough to do its job. We recommend a circulation pump with this system for optimum performance. The biggest advantage is that it will lower the amount of sanitizer chemical that you will need to be added at regular intervals with a traditional system, or lower your maintenance setting with a salt system.

### What should I look for in my warranty and after purchase care?

A spa is a large investment. It will need regular maintenance, and occasionally, will need a repair performed. Look for a warranty that covers all of your components, as well as the labour to fix them. Be sure that you have an experienced retailer that you can trust to perform any labour required to repair your spa under warranty. Make sure you have a contact that helps you with your questions about hot tub care and ownership as they come up.

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#### Chinook Hot Tubs & Saunas Showroom and Service Hours

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Monday, Closed\*

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Friday 9am to 5pm

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2050 Scott Street

Ottawa, ON K1Z 6T1

Phone: **(613) 729-1447**

Fax: (613) 729-8617

info@chinookhottubs.ca

\* when extreme cold necessitates, we check our phone messages daily for emergencies