



## Scandinavian hot tubs Safety advice note for commercial operators

### What you need to know

- A Scandinavian spa or hot tub is typically a circular wooden tank containing water for bathing. There is no mechanical circulation or filtration of the water.
- Scandinavian spas are single use only. This means that the water must be drained after each bathing session, the tub cleaned and left empty.
- Water is heated on demand using either an electrical heater or an external wood-fired boiler.
- People can get skin rashes and infections from poorly managed Scandinavian spas. This is because organic matter from bathers can accumulate in the water and, without any mechanical circulation and filtration, bacteria can grow rapidly in the water.
- Chemical disinfection is not appropriate for Scandinavian spas because of the lack of mechanical circulation and filtration.
- These hot tubs are typically **not** aerated by air blowers or jets; any that would have to be managed as spa pools because of the risk of Legionnaires' Disease.

### What you need to do

1. If you provide holiday accommodation, you have duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act. 1974 to protect the health and safety of your guests. This duty includes the provision of a Scandinavian hot tub for your guests.
2. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for installation and maintenance. Any electrical installations must be done by a competent electrician.
3. You **must** write a procedure to ensure that the following rules are followed:
  - Use only treated, potable, water in the tub.
  - Only add water to the tub just before a planned bathing session, otherwise the tub must be kept empty.
  - Water must be held in the tub for no more than 5 hours.
  - To prevent the growth of bacteria, the water should be heated over not more than 2 hours. A cover over the tub will help in heating the water.
  - The bathing time should not exceed 1 hour.
4. Provide the correct type of fuel for your guests to use. Give them instructions on safe charging and ignition of the fire. You may wish to provide a water fire extinguisher.

5. The water temperature should never exceed 40 degrees Celsius. A temperature of 36 to 38 degrees Celsius is considered safe for a healthy adult. Provide a suitable thermometer so that users can check the water temperature.
6. Using a paddle to stir the water before bathing helps ensure an even temperature.
7. Provide your guests with advice on using the tub safely and hygienically. Users should always shower before using the tub.
8. Ensure that people can get in and out of the tub safely and without getting their feet dirty. Handrails and steps must be non-slip, secure and inspected weekly.
9. You should regularly check that your guests are following your rules.
10. You must keep records of the checks you make; this will demonstrate that you are complying with your duties and help you if there are complaints.
11. Remember that **children** cannot regulate their body temperatures as well as adults and should not use the tub for prolonged periods or without adult supervision. **Infants and toddlers** should not use hot tubs at all.
12. The NHS advise that **women who are pregnant** should avoid using hot tubs because the higher temperatures can be harmful, with the risks of overheating, dehydration and fainting.
13. The British Heart Foundation states: *'If you have **a heart condition** or have **high blood pressure**, it is generally advisable not to use spa facilities – including baths, saunas, and jacuzzis or steam rooms. Sudden changes in temperature can put extra strain on your heart and circulation. Before doing these activities, have a chat to your GP.'*

## Further reading

The information and guidance in this advice sheet is based upon the following sources:

- HSG 282 *Control of legionella and other infectious agents in spa-pool systems* (HSE 2017) <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg282.htm>
- BS EN 17125:2018 *Domestic spas/whirlpool spas/hot tubs. Safety requirements and test methods* <https://doi.org/10.3403/30358109>
- *Hot Tubs for Business* (Pool Water Treatment Advisory Group 2018) [www.pwttag.org.uk](http://www.pwttag.org.uk)

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