



Relax on the Safe Side: Safety for the Home Spa

Nothing comforts tired muscles like a relaxing soak in a spa. When used and maintained correctly, a spa can provide countless hours of enjoyment and therapy for the whole family.

However, dangers do exist if the spa is used improperly or breaks down. Below, the UL team has outlined a few simple steps your family can take to ensure that your spa remains a safe, secure place to relax.

How Can I Prevent Drowning?

The most significant hazard from spas and hot tubs is the same as swimming pools — drowning. Since 1980, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has reported more than 700 deaths in spas and hot tubs – almost all preventable. About one-third of those deaths were drownings involving children under the age of five.

Under normal operating conditions, pipes leading from a spa's drain, or into the spa's pumps, (Spa pumps may be found on the floor or lower portion of the tub/basin,) draw water from the pool, creating suction. If an obstruction blocks the drain leading into this pipe, the amount of suction increases as the pump draws water past the obstruction. Hair entanglement and body entrapment can occur and result in drowning.

To reduce this risk, spas that bear the UL Mark are required to have two suction openings or drains for each pump, lessening the amount of suction at each opening. Suction fittings are tested by UL engineers to determine whether a person could pull away from the drain opening with less than 5 pounds of force.

UL also recommends these additional safety tips when using spas:

- Never operate a spa if suction fittings are broken or missing.
- Spa heat can cause hyperthermia and unconsciousness. Keep the water temperature at 104 degrees Fahrenheit or below. Immediately leave the spa if you become uncomfortable or sleepy.
- Drug and alcohol use in conjunction with spa heat can cause unconsciousness. Never use a spa while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Know where the cut-off switch for your pump is so you can turn it off in an emergency.
- Attach a locked spa cover after each use.
- Never soak in a spa alone.
- Supervise children at all times.
- To prevent electrocution, never place any electric appliance within 5 feet of the spa.
- Pregnant women should consult their doctors before using spas.