

Salt Systems for Hot Water Spas... Things to Know Before You Decide



The Rest Of the Story

Here's the rest of the story about using salt water systems for sanitizing your hot tub. Salt water systems are being promoted as the better way to keep hot tub water clean because allegedly:

1. They require less work because it's automated and "hands free".
2. They don't depend on harsh chemicals like chlorine, bromine or spa shock



3. They use an inexpensive salt like table salt instead of expensive hot tub chemicals
4. They leave your skin feeling better because they don't have harsh, traditional sanitizers
5. They are environmentally friendly because they use less chemicals
6. They use diamonds in the system to create powerful cleaners

Now, don't get me wrong. Salt water hot tub sanitization can be beneficial if you are willing to understand the reality of the system. So, lets peel back the "hype" and look at the reality by examining each of the above claims.

Claim 1, less work: They require less work because it's automated and hands free. The simplest answer to this claim is to look at one major hot tub manufacturer's salt water sanitization manual.



The manual has 16 pages and includes 167 separate warnings, procedures and descriptions. This means that there is a huge amount of work required to operate and maintain this system. That manual is also full of dozens of required actions, making it much less "hands free" than traditional sanitizing. This includes fun things to do in maintaining a salt water system like removing the "cell" and cleaning it in an acid solution every three months, then reinstalling it.

Claim 2, no harsh chemicals: They don't depend on harsh chemicals like chlorine. Well, they use salt and water to constantly produce five harsh chemicals in your hot tub water as you use the tub. **Their main "powerful cleaner" is in fact good old chlorine.** Salt water system manufacturers also recommend that you use normal spa chlorine and spa water shock any time that the tested chlorine level gets low...which can be frequently. So much for not using "harsh chemicals".

Claim 3, inexpensive to use: It's true that special hot tub salt is a little less expensive than hot tub chlorine (\$7 a month for hot tub salt vs. \$15 a month for hot tub chlorine). But, the salt is a very small factor in the overall salt water system cost. Here are the real costs:

1. Stand alone salt water systems: **\$500 to \$700** to purchase and only a one year warranty.
2. Built in salt water systems: Up to **\$1500** and only a one year warranty. Sometimes the salt system is thrown in for "free" with the purchase price of the hot tub. Nothing is "free". Wouldn't you prefer a \$1500 cash discount instead?
3. Cells have a 1.6 year average life and cost from **\$300 to \$500** each time one is replaced.
4. Salt water system users also have to purchase:
 - Hot tub chlorine
 - Hot tub shock
 - Special calcium remover
 - PH up and PH down
 - Stain and scale defense
 - De-foamer
 - 5 way test strips



So, over five to ten years, the salt water system users will save a little on the salt, but overall they will spend thousands of dollars more on water sanitization than traditional hot tub chlorine or bromine users.

Claim 4, skin feels better: It's true that a little salt in the water will not affect your skin. However, the salt water system uses a special "cell" to generate elemental oxygen, chlorine and several other "powerful" cleaners and oxidizers. Your skin reacts to these powerful cleaners and oxidizers just like it will react to hot tub chlorine. Whether its salt water generated oxidizers or hot tub chlorine, having too much of either will not be beneficial to your skin.

Claim 5, they're environmentally beneficial because of less chemicals: It's true that when the 167



cautions and procedures for salt water sanitization are regularly and carefully followed, less harsh chemicals will be used. Similarly, if the simple procedures for using regular hot tub sanitizers are followed, much less harsh chemicals will be used. Oh by the way, the salt water system constantly uses electricity and requires the manufacturing of non environmentally friendly components that have to be thrown out on a regular basis.



Claim 6, diamonds are used in the "cell": Not really. Just a diamond vapor is deposited in the "cell". And, after the "cells" fail, they're thrown in the trash. Not much diamond value after all. Apparently, diamonds are referred to as a way to make the salt water systems appear more valuable.

The bottom line: Sadly salt water sanitization systems for hot tubs are over "hyped", making consumers confused. They are in fact, complicated to operate properly, expensive to purchase and maintain, create harsh oxidizers and have no special environmental advantages.