

It is inevitable that hot tub covers are going to acquire a little dust and dirt every once in a while. But this is only the beginning. Beyond the dust and dirt, all hot tub covers will eventually fade, crack, and take on water moisture and become very heavy. This is what causes a cover to become nothing but a worthless piece of trash. The good part is, by reading this, you will learn about the things you can do, and the things you shouldn't do, to make your cover last the longest it possibly can, and continue to be your number-one-defense in saving on your hot tub's energy costs. It is all in the maintenance and care, and luckily for hot tub owners, maintaining and caring for a hot tub cover can be very simple, and in the long-run, can save them some serious money. If you take the time to read the following, and take the advice to heart, I guaranty you will greatly increase the life expectancy of your cover. Don't be like the many who get to a point where it's too late.

Clean Your Cover Regularly!

Cleaning the cover regularly will remove dust and dirt, and mold and mildew build-up. Your hot tub's cover does not mind dust and dirt, because dust and dirt do not hurt the cover. Your hot tub's water, however, does not like dust and dirt at all. Dust and dirt will eventually cause bacteria to build-up in the moisture that builds up on the bottom of the hot tub cover, and inside it. This bacteria then gets into the hot tub's water and causes you to add more chemicals and spend more money. Now, both the hot tub's cover and water dislike mold and mildew equally. Mold and mildew build-up causes bacteria in the same way as dust and dirt does, but mold and mildew also causes the cover to eventually hold a funky odor. People come into our store all of the time and tell us that their "water" has a bad, "musty" smell to it. Yes, it may be the water, but we first ask if their water has been in the tub for longer than six months, if they have tried to "super shock" their tub with sanitizer, if they have tried to chemically clean their filters with filter cleaner, and if they have tested their water to make sure all the maintenance chemical levels are within the ideal ranges. Ninety-nine percent of the time these people who have a "musty" smell say they have done "everything," including draining the hot tub to get rid of the smell, but the smell just will not go away. When your hot tub's water is crystal clear and perfectly balanced, your filters have been recently cleaned, and your water is not older than six months, the musty smell is not the water at all; I guaranty the smell is the cover. And it needs to be cleaned.

When cleaning the cover, use only a specifically designed hot tub cover cleaner (We sell a great non-caustic cover cleaner at our store. Ask us about it!) Any cleaner will clean your cover, yes, but no matter what you hear or think, it is not good to clean your cover with soapy water or household cleaners, for these chemicals can find their way into your hot tub's water and cause frustrating foam or make it difficult to balance the water. This can happen no matter how much you rinse your cover off after using these household chemicals, too, believe me.

There are two ways to clean your cover, using our special cover cleaners, and I recommend doing it *both* ways. The first way is unzipping the cover's outer layer, (or the "skin," as I call it,) removing the foam inserts, and then wiping everything down with the cover cleaner mixed with water. You would then rinse everything off, let everything dry,

put the foam inserts back in the skin, and then put the cover back on the tub. Now, in New England, mother nature makes it quite difficult for us to do such a great job during the winter months, and this is why I say to only go to this extreme *once every two years*. The second way to clean your cover, which I recommend doing *at least every two months*, is wiping the outer parts of the cover down with the special cover cleaner and then rinsing it off. The only exception to the rule, however, of not using household cleaning products, is when you *physically see black or dark spots* on your cover that should not be there. The black or dark spots are mold, and the mold needs to be removed. This mold, as I've explained, will eventually cause a musty smell (It is wise to understand that if you indeed do have a musty smell present, but do not see any signs of mold, you still should clean your cover.) The most common place you will see mold is where the cover fold comes together, and where the bottom of the cover rests on the hot tub shell. Mold is very common on covers when the hot tub is indoors, especially when there is poor ventilation in the room, but this does not mean mold is uncommon on covers of outdoor hot tubs. The only household cleaner I do feel is ok to use on your cover, *but only when you physically see mold on the cover*, is bleach. When using bleach, be sure to DILUTE the bleach with warm water (I feel a half-cup of bleach mixed with a gallon of water is plenty enough to kill the mold.) Take the cover completely off the hot tub, if you can, and wipe down the entire cover, focusing more time on the black or dark spots you see. I even recommend unzipping the cover's skin, removing the foam inserts, and wiping everything down, like the way you should every two years, but this time, with the bleach. Rinse the heck out of everything after you're done with the bleach, especially if anyone who uses the hot tub is allergic to bleach or chlorine, or if the hot tub's chemical program is a "Non-Chlorine/Non-Bromine" system like Baquaspa or Leisure Time's "Free Sanitizer System." Using the bleach will get rid of the mold for sure, but the only way to prevent an outbreak of mold happening again is to clean your cover regularly with our hot tub cover cleaner, in the ways I have explained.

Protect Your Cover Regularly!

The nice, warm sun is my friend, but it is not your hot tub cover's compadre at all! The sun will crack the cover's skin, cause the stitching to rip apart, and fade the cover's color, making it look bad. You need to add a UV protectant every few weeks. DO NOT use Armor All on your cover for UV protectant! Please, do not. The two problems with Armor All is that Armor All becomes a magnet for dust and airborne dirt, because it is so oily, which means you have to clean your cover more. The other problem is that Armor All contains a lot of Petroleum, which actually can degrade vinyl, rubber, and plastic, and do more harm to your cover than the sun will do. A product such as "303 Aerospace Protectant," (which we sell at our store,) is not oily at all. 303 will provide protection from the sun better than Armor All, it will restore the cover's skin color, and it will not attract dust and dirt like Armor All (oily products.) Matter-of-fact, 303 Aerospace Protectant will repel dust and dirt. Use only 303 Aerospace Protectant to protect your cover from the sun. And in the summer months, wipe it on the outer parts of your cover's skin every few weeks.

Important Tips to Prevent Your Cover from Becoming Heavy:

The foam inserts, which are the main insulating parts of the cover, are wrapped in a plastic protective liner. There are different thicknesses to these liners, and some are even sealed around the foam with commercial clear tape, which means the cover is not a good one (our covers are wrapped in thick, 4 or 8 mil liners, and are also "heat sealed," not taped.) Regardless of the thickness of the liner or how it is sealed, the plastic protective liner is the foam insert's only defense against water moisture. If there was no

protective liner around the foam, moisture would immediately absorb into the foam, and very quickly, the cover would become very, very heavy. Now, no matter how good the protective liner is, it is important to understand that chemicals can eat away at the protective liner, and over time, cause the liner to become porous. This means the foam will then start to absorb water moisture, which means the cover will then start to get heavy. What can also cause the liner to let moisture in is if for some reason the foam inserts become cracked. If the inserts are cracked, the more weight that is put on the cover, the more the protective liner will stretch. This stretching, too, can cause the liner to become porous. To avoid your cover getting heavy, it is very important that you...

- 1) ALWAYS keep the cover completely open for at least 15 minutes after adding sanitizer (i.e.: Chlorine, Powdered Bromine, BaquaSpa Sanitizer!!!)
- 2) NEVER lift your cover to open it when there is snow or ice on top of the cover!!!
- 3) ALWAYS remove snow off the cover after each snow storm!!! By doing this, you will also prevent ice build-up on the cover.
- 4) NEVER use a shovel to remove snow off the cover; gently use a broom!!!
- 5) NEVER use salt or ice melt to remove ice off your cover; pour warm (not hot) water over the ice, then immediately stand the cover up vertically till dry!!!
- 6) NEVER allow humans or animals to get on top of the cover!!!

If your cover does become heavy, I regret to tell you, but there is not really too much you can do about it. Most covers have a zipper system that allows you to remove the inner foam (as I've talked about.) If your cover gets heavy, I recommend taking out the foam during the summer, lay two 2 x 4 boards on your lawn, and place the foam on the boards (so that air can travel between the lawn and foam.) Lay the foam directly in the hot sun. After a couple of days, the moisture may evaporate, and the foam may become lighter, but I am not making any promises.

Other Important Tips:

If you shut your hot tub down for long periods of time, you should wrap the hot tub in a plastic tarp, with the cover on the hot tub. This will greatly increase the life of cover. If you tarp the hot tub during winter, MAKE SURE you get the snow build-up off the tub after each snow storm. Keeping the cover dry, out of the sun, and not a lot of weight on it is the best defenses against aging, while the hot tub is shut down.

The last thing I can recommend to a consumer with a hot tub, to insure their cover lasts the longest it can, is to buy a cover lifter if they do not already have one. A cover lifter makes it easier to enter the hot tub, and prevents unfortunate accidents from happening. My recommendation on a brand of cover lifter is, by far, the Leisure Concepts brand.