Hot Tub Safety

A guide to not becoming a hot tub zombie. The jokes are ours; the numbers are not negotiable.

The one-minute version

- **38 °C is the ceiling.** Above that, a long soak stops being relaxing and starts being medical.
- **No booze, no drugs, no medication you haven't checked.** They are the common thread in almost every hot tub accident.
- **Children are never in a hot tub unsupervised**, and a pool fence is a legal requirement, not a suggestion.
- **Heart condition, pregnancy, or on prescriptions?** Talk to your doctor first. Every time.
- **Never soak alone if you feel unwell**, and get out the moment you feel light-headed.

Temperature

The ideal hot tub is a very good bath, not a sauna. If you are sweating like a teenager on a first date, you have gone too far. Measure the water with an accurate thermometer before you get in, and keep it **at or below 38 °C**.

Above that, prolonged soaking can cause drowsiness, fainting and hyperthermia. Hyperthermia happens when your core temperature climbs several degrees above the normal 37 °C. It starts as dizziness, lethargy and drowsiness, which sounds pleasant and is exactly the problem: the early symptoms include failing to notice the heat and failing to recognise that you need to get out. At its worst it means an inability to climb out at all, and unconsciousness in water.

> **Wood-fired tubs heat in layers.** The top can be a good deal hotter than the bottom. Give the water a proper stir with the paddle before you get in, and check the temperature after stirring, not before. No lobster-top, ice-bottom surprises.

Alcohol, drugs and medication

Hot tubs and substances go together about as well as driving blindfold. Alcohol and drugs both impair your ability to notice that you are overheating, and both raise the risk of fatal hyperthermia considerably. Heat also dilates your blood vessels, which means anything affecting your blood pressure hits harder in a tub than it does on the sofa.

If you take prescribed medication, or have any heart or circulatory condition, talk to your doctor before you use a hot tub. It is a two-minute conversation and it is worth having.

Who should check first

IF YOU ARE	THEN
Pregnant, or possibly pregnant	Speak to your doctor before soaking. Raised core temperature carries a risk to a developing baby, and the standard advice is to skip the hot tub.
Managing a heart or circulatory condition	Speak to your doctor. Heat puts real load on the cardiovascular system.
On prescribed medication	Check with your doctor or pharmacist, particularly anything for blood pressure, sedatives, or anything that says “may cause drowsiness”.
Unwell or infectious	Stay out. Shared warm water is an excellent way to share whatever you have.
Fresh from a hard workout	Cool down properly first. Going straight from exertion into hot water is how people faint.

Children

Keep children out unless a responsible adult is in the water with them, watching. Children overheat faster than adults, have less sense of when to stop, and cannot always get themselves out.

Beyond supervision, there is a legal duty. A hot tub is a pool for the purposes of New Zealand law, and you must fence it to your local council's specifications. Check with your council before your first fill; the rules are not the same everywhere, and retrofitting a fence is more expensive than building one.

> **A cover is not a fence.** A well-fitted, secured cover is a good thing and keeps your heat bill down, but it is not a substitute for compliant fencing and it never has been.

Getting in and out

More people hurt themselves on the way out of a hot tub than in one. Warm water, wet cedar and a body that has just been at 38 °C for twenty minutes make a poor combination with a confident leap.

- Use the steps. They come with every Tubby for a reason.
- Move slowly and give yourself a moment upright before you walk off.
- Keep a hand on the rim. The stainless ledge is there to be held.
- If you feel dizzy, sit on the step rather than standing up and hoping.

Fire and ash (wood-fired tubs)

Your firebox does everything a fire does, including throwing sparks.

- Site the tub where sparks and embers cannot start a fire. Concrete or gravel under the ash box, not decking, not bark, not dry grass.
- Keep the area around the tub clear of anything that burns, pets included.
- Never leave a lit firebox unattended, and never use accelerants such as petrol or kerosene to get it going.
- Empty the ash box only when the ash is **completely cold**. Put it in a metal bucket with a metal lid and leave it a full week before it goes anywhere near a rubbish bin. Ash holds heat far longer than looks possible.
- Keep a fire extinguisher within reach, and make sure there is proper ventilation. Never run a firebox in an enclosed space.

Sensible house rules

Do

- Drink water before, during and after.
- Keep soaks to 15–20 minutes and get out if you feel odd.
- Shower first. It keeps oils and lotions out of the water.
- Tell someone you are getting in, if you are on your own.
- Replace the cover properly when you are done.

Don't

- Turn a soak into a party. Warm water and a crowd of drinks is the classic recipe.
- Dive, jump or duck under. It is a tub, not a pool.
- Soak while unwell.
- Leave the cover off with children about.
- Ignore feeling light-headed and hope it passes.

> **Treat this as a summary, not the whole law.** The full safety precautions and our terms of trade live at **tubbytubs.co.nz/legal/terms-and-warranty**. If anything here is unclear, email us at **info@soaknz.com** rather than guessing.