Water Care for Short-Stay Operators

Running a Tubby in an Airbnb is a different job from running one at home. Here's how to keep the water right, the guests happy and the steel in one piece.

This guide is for the electric tubs only. Everything that follows applies to Tubby electric models — Speed Demon Grande and Pocket Rocket Electric — which hold their water for months and run a SpaNET SV Mini controller with an ozone generator. That water needs testing, dosing and a filter routine.

Running a wood-fired Tubby commercially? Ignore all of it. Wood-fired tubs take no chemicals at all. Between guests you drain the tub, refill it from the hose and light the fire. That is the entire water-care routine, and there is nothing to test, dose or log.

The one-minute version (electric tubs)

- Sanitise with **sodium dichlor**, sold in New Zealand as "spa chlorine".
- Hold **3 ppm free chlorine** at **pH 7.4–7.6**. Never let chlorine go above **5 ppm**.
- **Do not use** bromine, chlorine-free biguanide (PHMB) systems, salt chlorinators, or pool chlorine.
- Test the water **between every changeover**. Clean the filter cartridge **weekly**, not monthly.
- Check the ozone hose and check valve **once a year**. The ozone cell is a consumable.

Two things that make your tub different

Ozone is the second line of defence, not the first. Your tub runs an ozone generator, and it is very good at oxidising the oils, sunscreen and skin cells guests leave behind. But ozone holds no residual. It works, then disappears within seconds, so it cannot keep water safe between soaks on its own. Any tub taking a run of different guests needs a sanitiser underneath it, holding a measurable residual from one soak to the next.

Stainless steel has a chlorine ceiling. Your tub is lined with 316 marine-grade stainless, protected by a thin chromium oxide layer that chloride attacks. Below about 5 ppm you are entirely fine. Sustained above it, you break down the layer that makes the steel stainless, and that damage is permanent. Which is why the number matters, and why guessing isn't good enough.

What to use, and what to hold it at

WHAT	TARGET	NOTES
Sanitiser	Sodium dichlor	Sold as “spa chlorine”. Stabilised, dissolves fully, and the sanitiser ozone systems are designed around.
Free chlorine	3 ppm	Absolute ceiling 5 ppm for 316 stainless. Test it, don't estimate it.
pH	7.4 – 7.6	Chlorine loses much of its bite above 7.8. Correct pH before adding more sanitiser.
Alkalinity & hardness	Per your strips	Follow the ranges printed on your test-strip tub; they vary by brand.
Optional	Mineral stick	A Nature2 stick in the filter housing (approx. $105, lasts four months) reduces how much chlorine the water needs. Not a replacement for it.

Dosing. Work from your tub's actual water volume, not a guess. A typical label rate is around 80 g per 1,000 litres on first fill, then roughly a teaspoon per person per soak. Label instructions always win over this guide, brands differ in strength.

Where to buy it in New Zealand

Perfect Pools
perfectpools.co.nz
Crystalline Chlorine 1 kg, approx. $19.80
Labelled sodium dichloroisocyanurate · ships NZ-wide

Bluewater Pools
bluewaterpools.co.nz
Spa Chlorine (Dichlor), 1, 2, 5 and 10 kg
Useful if you run several tubs

Your local pool shop
Nationwide
Ask for **spa chlorine (dichlor)**, never pool chlorine
Christchurch: Poolside, on Blenheim Road

Spa chlorine and pool chlorine are not the same thing. Pool products are usually trichlor or calcium hypochlorite. Trichlor is strongly acidic and will pit your stainless; cal-hypo clouds the water and drives hardness up. Both are wrong for a tub this size. Check the label says dichlor before it goes in.

The routine

Between every guest

- Test free chlorine and pH. Correct pH first, then sanitiser.
- Skim the surface and wipe the waterline. Body oils collect there and go tacky.
- Run a filtration cycle before the next arrival, not during.
- Check the cover seals properly. A gaping cover is most of your heat bill.

Every week

- Pull the cartridge and hose it out. Under guest use, weekly is the minimum.
- Keep a second cartridge so one can dry while the other works.
- Look at the water in daylight. Cloudy usually means a loaded filter, not a chemistry problem.

Every three to six months: drain and refill, more often if the tub is busy. Dissolved solids build up no matter how well you dose, and past a point no amount of sanitiser makes old water feel fresh. Guests can tell.

> **Keep a log.** A notebook by the plant room with the date, the chlorine reading and the pH takes ten seconds a changeover, and it is the first thing anyone official will ask to see.

What not to use, and why

AVOID	WHY
Bromine	Not recommended alongside ozone in a commercial spa. Ozone and bromide together form bromate, a regulated contaminant you do not want in water guests sit in.
Biguanide / PHMB (the chlorine-free systems)	Genuinely pleasant products, in a tub with no ozone generator. Corona-discharge ozone destroys PHMB, so you would be dosing a sanitiser that is no longer in the water. The tub reads as treated while being unprotected.
Salt chlorinators	The chloride load and raised dissolved solids are hard on stainless steel. Fine on an acrylic spa; not on yours.
Pool chlorine	Trichlor and cal-hypo. Wrong chemistry, wrong strength, and trichlor's acidity attacks the steel. Spa chlorine only.

Looking after the ozone unit

Ozone generators rarely fail because of chemistry. They fail because of plumbing, and quietly, so you tend to find out when the water starts working harder than it should.

- **The check valve.** It stops water backing up the line into the cell. When it sticks or scales up, water gets in and the unit is finished. Inspect annually.
- **The ozone hose.** Ozone embrittles it from the inside. When it yellows and goes stiff it is close to splitting. Replace it rather than wait.
- **The cell is a consumable.** Roughly two to three years for a UV lamp, three to five for a corona-discharge chip. Budget for it the way you would a filter, and replace it on schedule rather than on failure.

Your obligations as a commercial operator

A spa used by paying guests is not treated the same as a private one. Most councils apply water-quality requirements to commercially operated pools and spas: testing frequency, record-keeping, and sometimes registration. Details vary by district, so ring your council before your first booking rather than after a complaint.

These obligations can apply to a wood-fired tub as well, even though it takes no chemicals. The chemistry is not the part councils care about — the record of what you did between guests is. A dated line in a notebook saying “drained and refilled” does the same job for a wood-fired tub as a chlorine reading does for an electric one.

Wood-fired tubs: the whole routine

Between every guest

- **Drain it.** Pull the end cap, unscrew the pipe, and let it go. A garden hose on the drain fitting takes the water away from the tub.
- **Rinse and wipe.** Mild detergent and a soft brush or sponge on the waterline, then rinse thoroughly so no residue is left behind.
- **Refill from the hose** and light the fire. Two to three hours to temperature.
- **Clear the ash box** once the ash is completely cold, into a metal container.

No chlorine, no test strips, no filter cartridge, no ozone unit. Fresh water every time is what keeps a wood-fired tub safe, and it is why they suit short-stay properties so well.

Not sure which tub you have? If it has a firebox and a chimney, it is wood-fired and this guide does not apply to it. If it has a control panel, a filter housing and a power cable, it is electric and everything in here does.

Not sure about something else? Email us at **info@soaknz.com**. We would far rather work it out with you than have you read about it in a guest review.