

## Health and Safety in the Spa

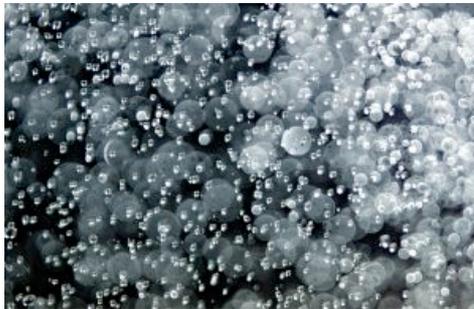
### Hazards

There are hazards in all working environments and a spa has its own particular hazards relating to the environment and the type of treatments on offer. Once these hazards are identified and the management has put control measures in place to reduce the risk of illness or injury, the spa is a very safe environment in which to relax. The following are some examples of hazards the spa therapist must be aware of.

### Legionnaires disease

Legionnaires disease is a potentially fatal lung infection caused by the legionella bacteria. It is caused by exposure to contaminated water droplets from air conditioning systems, hot and cold water systems and spa baths.

The name comes from the first identified outbreak at a hotel that was hosting a convention for a veteran organisation called the American Legion.



*[photo courtesy of pavel matousek](#)*

Although the legionella bacteria occurs naturally in the environment, in rivers and lakes it doesn't usually cause a problem. However, they also find their way into water supply systems and a spa environment that uses water therapies is at risk. Spas vary in size from large bath tubs to small pools, with equipment that heats, disinfects and re-circulates the water on a regular basis. They also contain air jets of water and air. When legionella bacteria are present the bather may be affected if they inhale the contaminated spray or mist that result from some water treatments, thus exposing the lungs to the bacteria.

The legionella bacteria can survive at low temperatures but do not multiply. However, the bacteria does begin to multiply when the temperature is between 20°C – 40°C, above 60°C it is destroyed.

The reason a spa bath is at risk from this disease is because:

- The water is at an ideal temperature for the bacteria to multiply
- Dirt and dead skin cells that accumulate in the bath provide a food source for the bacteria
- The piping for the air and water circulation provides a large surface area in which the bacteria may thrive
- The water produces a fine spray allowing the bacteria to be inhaled by the bather

To eliminate the risk it is important to:

- Conduct a risk assessment
- Put control measures in place to prevent contamination
- Spa pools and showers should be regularly disinfected
- Monitor the control measures and make sure that all staff are trained in these measures
- Ensure all staff are aware of the symptoms of exposure to contamination
- Keep health and safety records up to date

Some control measures include:

- Water should be tested regularly for disinfectant, pH levels and clarity
- Water should be treated regularly if it is not on a continual dosing system
- Filters strainers, backwash and sand filters should be checked daily
- The whole system should be drained and cleaned weekly

### **Cryptosporidium**

Cryptosporidium is a microscopic single celled organism which when swallowed causes gastroenteritis. It belongs to a group of microorganisms known as protozoa and is found in the infected faeces of humans and animals. It is found in lakes, streams and rivers, untreated water and sometimes swimming pools and spa baths.

To help reduce the risk of contamination the spa pool user should:

- Avoid swallowing water in swimming pools or spa baths
- Shower well before entering a pool or spa bath
- Protect others by abstaining from using any type of recreational pool whilst suffering from diarrhoea and for two weeks after.

The Spa operator should:

- Follow effective water treatment processes, particularly filtration and clarification
- Ensure chemical parameters are maintained within the recommended limits and dosage and adjusted according to the number of people using the pool or spa
- Test the water prior to and after use and monitor chemical parameters regularly when dosing is controlled manually ( every 2 hours)
- Ensure pH is maintained between 7.2 and 7.8 to maintain effective disinfection
- Provide information to all spa users about safe bathing
- Provide training on disease prevention for all spa and pool staff.

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- Carry out bacteriological testing monthly and more often if problems are identified
- Close the pool or spa if the water could be a health risk to bathers
- Ensure filters are adequately cleaned and maintained
- Ensure all equipment is regularly serviced and maintained
- Regularly check, clean and disinfect the balance tanks for the spa, the connecting channels and the spa itself

## Hair Entanglement

This may occur if the bather's hair becomes stuck in the suction mechanism of the spa causing the head to be held under the water.

[\*photo courtesy of silverhawk\*](#)



Control measures include:

- Instruct the clients in safe spa use
- Display safety instructions close to the spa pool
- Provide shower caps for use
- Have a responsible person in attendance whilst spa is in use
- Instruct all staff in safety measures
- Know where the cut off switch for the pump is so it can be switched off in an emergency

## Chemicals

Handling chemicals can cause irritation to the skin and in some cases burns. Chemicals also pose a danger if they are mixed, producing gases that may lead to asphyxiation.

Control measures include:

- Devising a safe system for delivery, storage, transportation, handling and disposal of chemicals
- Training all members of staff in their use

[\*photo courtesy of Griszka Niewiadomski\*](#)

- Storing different chemicals away from each other
- Clearly labelling all chemicals
- Using less hazardous chemicals if possible
- Ensuring all staff, have the correct personal protective equipment when handling chemicals
- Keeping records of safety data sheets provided by the manufacturers
- Ensuring the plant room and chemical storage area is well ventilated



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## Heat

The sauna, steam room and spa are located in what is commonly termed the 'wet area' and these treatments may cause, heat exhaustion, cross infection, dehydration or burns. To reduce the risk of accidents or injury the following control measures may be put in place

- Display clear instructions in a prominent position explaining how the equipment should be used. This may be in the form of a poster and should include safety precautions and special warnings. Ideally both words and pictures should be used
- Ensure the equipment is cleaned regularly
- Ensure the equipment is checked regularly by a competent person
- Ensure the area is properly supervised
- Ensure clients wear protective footwear
- Ensure water is mopped up immediately
- Provide a supply of drinking water nearby

*[photo courtesy of Stephanie Berghaeuser](#)*

