

Consumer Product Safety Alert

FROM THE U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20207

Spas, Hot Tubs, and Whirlpools

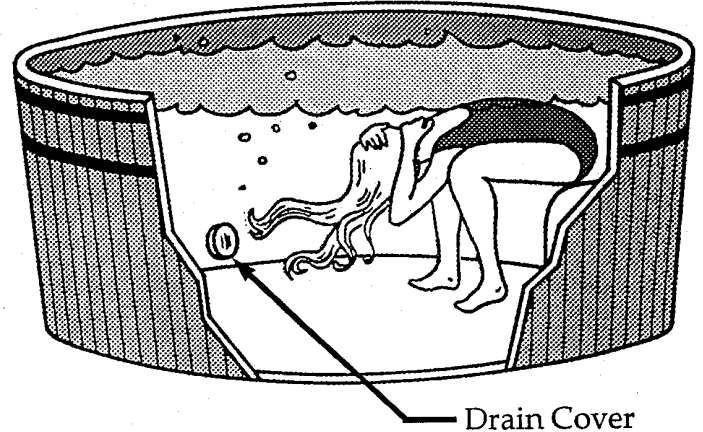
The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) helped develop standards to prevent hair entanglement and bodypart entrapment in spas, hot tubs, and whirlpools. These standards should help prevent deaths and injuries. Consumers should fix their old spas, hot tubs, and whirlpools with new, safer drain covers. CPSC warns about these hazards:

Drownings — The main hazard from hot tubs and spas is the same as that from pools - drowning. Since 1980, CPSC has reports of more than 700 deaths in spas and hot tubs. About one-third of those were drownings to children under age five. Consumers should keep a locked safety cover on the spa whenever it is not in use and keep children away unless there is constant adult supervision.

Hair Entanglement — Since 1978, CPSC has reports of 49 incidents (including 13 deaths) in which people's hair was sucked into the suction fitting of a spa, hot tub, or whirlpool, causing the victim's head to be held under water. Hair entanglement occurs when a bather's hair becomes entangled in a drain cover as the water and hair are drawn through the drain. In some incidents, children were playing a "hold your breath the longest" game. Permitting their long hair to be sucked into the drain. CPSC helped develop a voluntary standard for drain covers that helps reduce the risk of hair entrapment. Consumers should be sure they have new drain covers that meet this standard. If you are not sure, call a pool or spa professional to check the spa. Never allow a child to play in a way that could permit the child's hair to come near the drain cover. If a drain cover is missing or broken, shut down the spa until the cover is replaced.

Bodypart Entrapment — CPSC knows of 18 incidents since 1980 in which parts of the body have been entrapped by the strong suction of the drain of pools, wading pools, spas, and hot tubs. Of these, 10 resulted in disembowelment and 5 other people died. CPSC helped develop a standard requiring dome-shaped drain outlets and two outlets for each pump. This reduces the powerful suction if one drain is blocked. Consumers with older spas should have new drain covers installed and may want to consider getting a spa with two drains.

Hot Tub Temperatures — CPSC knows of several deaths from extremely hot water (approximately 110 degrees



Fahrenheit) in a spa. High temperatures can cause drowsiness which may lead to unconsciousness, resulting in drowning. In addition, raised body temperature can lead to heat stroke and death. In 1987, CPSC helped develop requirements for temperature controls to make sure that spa water temperatures never exceed 104 degrees Fahrenheit. Pregnant women and young children should not use a spa before consulting with a physician.

CPSC recommends these safety precautions when using a hot tub, spa, or whirlpool:

1. Always use a locked safety cover when the spa is not in use and keep young children away from spas or hot tubs unless there is constant adult supervision.
2. Make sure the spa has the dual drains and drain covers required by current safety standards.
3. Regularly have a professional check your spa or hot tub and make sure it is in good, safe working condition, and that drain covers are in place and not cracked or missing. Check the drain covers yourself throughout the year.
4. Know where the cut-off switch for your pump is so you can turn it off in an emergency.
5. Be aware that consuming alcohol while using a spa could lead to drowning.
6. Keep the temperature of the water in the spa at 104 degrees Fahrenheit or below.