FACT SHEET 15
SANITISERS

Pools and spas require ongoing protection from their major pollutant—swimmers.

Bacteria will grow in any untreated body of water. Swimmers are the primary source of bacteria in pools, but should a big dog go in for a dip it will contribute 20 times as much as a human. Top-up water and debris, such as leaves, grass and dust, are also sources of bacteria.

Bacteria are a serious health risk and need to be killed quickly and effectively through regularly adding a sanitiser at recommended levels to the water.

The filter removes dead bacteria, and the 'residual sanitiser' left in the water will kill any new bacteria. Most bacteria will be killed when exposed to a 'free chlorine residual' as low as one milligram per litre or one part per million (ppm). Regularly water testing and adding the required amount of chlorine will easily maintain a residual level of 1.0 or 2.0 ppm.

TYPES OF APPROVED SANITISERS

Chlorine

Chlorine is available in granular, liquid or tablet form and can be stabilised or unstabilised. It can also be generated by a saltwater chlorinator. Each form has its features and benefits. Granular chlorine is convenient, easy to store and relatively cheap, but cannot be dosed automatically. Liquid chlorine can be dosed automatically, but is bulky, and has a limited shelf life due to loss of strength over time. All work effectively, so consult your authorised SPASA SA member pool shop for expert advice.

Safety note: never mix chemicals—even different types of chlorine. It could result in a fire and/or explosion.

Salt

Salt chlorinators make chlorine and come in different sizes to suit different pools, so select one that is able to produce sufficient chlorine for your needs. Even then, you may still need to add extra chlorine from time to time to maintain a satisfactory residual level.

CHLORINE FREE SANITISERS

For people who have developed an intolerance to chlorine, or who live with asthma, there are sanitisers that do not contain chlorine and that are registered by the Australian registration authority, further details can be found at www.apvma.gov.au. These products include Bianguanide, Hydrogen Peroxide and Hydrogen Peroxide with Silver Nitrate (the latter two are liquids and can be automatically dosed). The residual on Hydrogen Peroxide based products is several days.

STABILISER

Stabiliser (isocyanuric acid) is a chemical added to the pool water to reduce the loss of chlorine due to ultraviolet rays from the sun. Stabiliser can also be added manually to the pool, or in stabilised chlorine. Check the level of stabiliser in the water periodically. Stabiliser is not consumed like other chemicals in the pool, so it can build up to levels high enough to inhibit the effectiveness of the chlorine. Stabiliser is not required with chlorine-free sanitisers.

CHLORINE ODOUR

A strong chlorine smell doesn't mean too much chlorine, it may mean too little. Ammonia can produce chloramines and these produce odour, sore eyes and itchy skin. To remove them, add a boost of 'superchlorination', but always consult your SPASA SA member pool shop first.

HEATED POOLS AND SPAS

Heated pools and spas require more sanitiser than non-heated pools because sanitisers are consumed more quickly in hot water.

Alternative methods of sanitising pools and spas are available and are covered in Fact Sheet 14: Salt Chlorinators and Fact Sheet 16: Ozonators & Ionisers. Always consult your local SPASA SA member for expert advice on all pool chemicals.