



SPA TROUBLESHOOTING

Over the past year several facilities have experienced problems with spas. Bacteriological results were repeatedly positive for PSEUDOMONAS AERUGINOSA and the bacteria reappeared soon after a negative result was achieved. A number of different and sometimes unusual problems seemed to be involved at the different facilities.

Nancy Hall, head of the water bacteriology lab at the University Hygienic Laboratory, often consults with inspection agencies on problem spas. Based on her experience in Iowa and her knowledge of reported outbreak investigations nationally, she has developed a set of questions to be considered when investigating a problem spa. This is a preliminary list to help identify deficiencies in operation and structure.

CHECK LIST FOR PROBLEM SPAS

Maintenance Issues

1. How often is the filter cleaned?
2. How often is the spa drained and cleaned?
3. What is the filter cleaning procedure? Does it include disinfection?
4. Is the filter sand or cartridge in good condition and clean?
5. If there is a spa cover, is it cleaned routinely?
6. Is the spa surface in good condition and free from cracks and blemishes?
7. Any plumbing leaks?
8. Is there an air blower? Is the air piping accessible for cleaning and disinfection?
9. Has there been recent construction or modifications to the spa or the area around the spa?

Chemical Issues

1. Is disinfectant chemical feeder installed? Is it operational? Is it large enough? Is it supplied with disinfectant chemical routinely?
2. Are the right chemicals being used?
3. Is cyanuric acid or a stabilized chlorine used?
4. How often is the spa shock chlorinated?
5. Are disinfectant residuals consistent or are there peaks and valleys?
6. Are chemical levels (pH, alkalinity, hardness) in the correct range?
7. Any unusual chemicals used in or around the spa?

Monitoring Issues

1. Is the disinfectant residual and the pH checked at the required frequency?
2. Are bacteriologic samples sent to a certified lab at least once a month?
3. Are there written instructions for operational and maintenance procedures?
4. Are there records of testing, chemical usage, and maintenance procedures?
5. Is there a disinfectant/pH controller? Is it being used and maintained properly?

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