



Guidelines for baby spa installation, operation, monitoring and risk management

Purpose

Baby spas are an emerging type of aquatic facility in Western Australia where babies are permitted to float in a heated water body for a limited period.

Baby spas may pose a risk to users unless appropriate care is taken to ensure correct water temperature, disinfection and floatation equipment is used and maintained.

The following guidance is provided to local governments and operators to ensure the safe use of baby spas.

Scope

Baby spas may consist of two types of water bodies:

- Small spas: These spas have a capacity of less than approximately 100 L and are intended to accommodate individual younger babies aged up to approximately 8 weeks old.
- Large spas: With a capacity greater than approximately 100 L, are intended for group sessions and usually accommodate older babies aged from approximately 8 weeks to 6 months old.

This guidance document applies to all baby spas, however the approval requirements, water treatment, monitoring and testing sections only apply to baby spas where water is recirculated and not disposed after each use.

Approval requirements

- Baby spas used for commercial purposes in WA are regulated as an aquatic facility under the:
 - *Health (Aquatic Facilities) Regulations 2007*, and
 - Code of Practice for Design, Construction, Operation, Management and Maintenance of Aquatic Facilities (the Code of Practice).

- An application to the Chief Health Officer for an approval to construct and operate is required before installing a baby spa.
- After installation, the Department of Health will inspect the facility to ensure the requirements of this guidance note have been implemented.
- A Certificate of Compliance and a Permit to Operate signed and issued by the Chief Health Officer is required before a baby spa is permitted to be operated.
- An application form and the Code of Practice can be found at the link below:
https://ww2.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/J_M/Management-of-aquatic-facilities-in-Western-Australia.

Microbiological risk

There is the potential for various microorganisms including bacteria, amoeba, and viruses to be introduced into baby spas. To minimise risk, the following controls must be implemented:

- Baby spas not equipped with a recirculating water disinfection and filtration system are to be drained and cleaned after each use.
- Baby spas that are equipped with recirculating water disinfection and filtration systems must be emptied, cleaned, and sanitised with an appropriate product at least once a week.
- Users must be fitted with swim nappies to minimise the potential for contamination of the water from accidental faecal incidents.
- Where there is evidence of a faecal contamination event, the baby spa is to be immediately emptied, cleaned, sanitised with an appropriate product, and refilled.
 - For systems with a recirculating water disinfection and filtration system, prior to reopening of the baby spa, operators shall ensure compliance with the Water Quality Standards as per Section 5.1 of the Code of Practice (or as specified in this guideline where they may differ), and that the recirculation system has been in operation for at least 1 hour prior to re-opening.
- Appropriate hygiene practices are to be followed as detailed in the later sections of this guideline.

Structural design

Baby spas are:

- not to leak water or be constructed from materials with surfaces that promote the growth of microorganisms.
- be constructed from materials that are non-toxic, fit for purpose, chemically resistant, non-flammable and easily cleanable.
- to be situated and constructed on supporting structures and floors that are structurally sound and have suitable weight bearing capacity, due to the weight of the baby spas and their contents.

- to have fixtures and fittings on walls and floors that are fitted flush and have no sharp and protruding edges.
- to have floors surrounding the baby spa that are slip resistant (under wet or dry conditions).
- to have no entrapment hazards in or near the baby spa.

Operation

- Babies should be supervised by their parent or guardian at all times.
- Baby spa operators must:
 - be suitably qualified to effectively manage and operate the facility.
 - possess first aid qualifications and provide adequate first aid facilities in accordance with the requirements of a Group 3 facility as detailed in the Code of Practice.

Water supply

- Baby spas should source their water from a supply which meets the quality specified under the Australian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines 2011.

Water treatment

- All water must be treated via a recirculating water disinfection and filtration system prior to any contact with patrons in accordance with the principles of Section 3 of the Code of Practice.
- The Department of Health requires Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority approved chlorine-based disinfectants (e.g. hypochlorite) for use in baby spas.
- Other disinfectants such as bromine, hydrogen peroxide, chlorine dioxide and ozone are not permitted to be used in baby spas in Western Australia.
- To maintain a safe and comfortable environment, baby spas must ensure that chlorine levels are maintained at a minimum of 1mg/L and maximum 2mg/L free chlorine residual at all times.
- Ultraviolet (UV) light filters can be used as a disinfectant measure but only in combination with a chlorine disinfectant. This is due to UV light not providing a residual disinfection capacity within the water body.
- UV filters should be fully enclosed, placed in line within the filtration and disinfection system, and designed with a minimum dose of 40mJ/cm².
- Suction outlet systems must comply with AS 1926.3:2010 Swimming pool safety – Water reticulation systems.
- Baby spa recirculation systems shall not be operated if the main drain grates, or any suction outlet cover or grate is missing, broken, or insecurely fitted.

- Recirculation equipment shall always be in operation whenever a baby spa is open for use and shall commence operating a minimum of 1 hour before the first use and continue operating at a minimum 2 hours after the last use (unless drained at the end of the day).
- Water treatment systems must be designed to ensure compliance with the Water Quality Standards as per Section 5.1 of the Code of Practice (or as specified in this guideline where they may differ).
- A suitably qualified technical operator should be involved in managing water quality, plant, and equipment. The operator should meet the technical operator requirements as detailed in Section 6.2.7 of the Code of Practice.

Ventilation and access

- Indoor facilities must be ventilated by natural or mechanical means in accordance with the relevant parts of AS 1668 The use of ventilation and air conditioning in buildings.
- The water treatment plant room must be separated from the baby spa area, have adequate ventilation, proper provision for chemical storage and only be accessible by authorised personnel.

Heating systems

- Water heating systems must comply with the Code of Practice Appendix 3.
- Water heating appliances shall incorporate thermostatic controls to ensure users cannot be exposed to water above 38 Degrees.
- Water temperature should be maintained at approximately 36 Degrees.

Electrical systems

- All electrical installations shall be installed and maintained in accordance AS 3000:2018 Electrical Installations - Wiring Rules and principles of Section 2.28 Electrical Safety of the Code of Practice.
- An emergency stop switch must be fitted to the baby spa pumping and heater system, . The emergency stop switch shall be clearly marked, located within sight and easy reach of the baby spa, and no more than 3.0m from the baby spa.

Hygiene and use

- The accompanying parent or guardian is encouraged to keep babies' heads above water, avoid splashing of the face and ingestion of the spa water.
- Where flotation devices are used, the flotation devices must be medically prescribed, professionally fitted and compliant with applicable Australian product safety standards.
- Signage should be provided advising of hygiene requirements and other rules for the facility as per the principles of the Code of Practice.

- Sanitary facilities must be provided which include toilets, bathing facilities, hand basins and changing areas.
- Baby spa operators must maintain cleanliness and tidiness of facilities.
- Special flotation devices worn by users (and any other equipment such as toys, teething rings, etc.) shall be sanitised after each use using an appropriate product.
- Babies suffering from any visible cuts or broken skin, illness or disease should not be placed in or enter the baby spa.
- Babies should only be permitted to be in water for up to 15 minutes per visit.
- It is recommended that babies receive their 6-week immunisations prior to use of baby spa facilities. Information on childhood immunisation requirements can be found at https://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Childhood-immunisation-schedule.

Wastewater disposal

- Approval to dispose of baby spa water is required from either the Local Government (if to an onsite wastewater system) or to the Licensed Water Service Provider (if to sewer).
- If filter backwash is necessary, approval for backwash disposal must be obtained in a similar manner as above.

Monitoring and testing

- Operators are to monitor water chemistry whilst the baby spa is in use in accordance with Group 3 requirements of the Code of Practice. An additional test shall be undertaken prior to opening each day of use.
- All testing shall be recorded in a logbook.
- Microbiological monitoring, testing and remediation (where microbial contamination is identified) shall be undertaken in accordance with Table 8 of the Code of Practice.

More information

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