

Swimming pools are for fun and recreation, but it does take some basic maintenance to ensure your pool stays clean and sanitary throughout the swimming season. By adopting a few good habits, you can keep your water looking good.

Basic Chemicals

There are three critical levels you need to test and adjust for:

	Min	Max
Alkalinity	80	120
pH	7.2	7.8
Chlorine	2.0	4.0

All three are connected. Chlorine kills algae and bacteria, so maintaining the chlorine level is critical to a clean pool. PH levels affect how well chlorine works, and alkalinity determines how stable the PH levels are.

To keep these elements under control, you'll need 5 things: test strips, alkalinity adjuster, PH adjuster, chlorine tabs, and shock.

Once you've dipped your strip:

- Compare the color of the strip with the color swatches on the packaging
 - Check alkalinity first, then PH, then sanitizer levels
 - If any of those things is not where it should be, add the appropriate chemical to adjust it
 - If more than one thing needs adjusting, adjust them one at a time.
- Add the first chemical and wait several hours, or overnight
 - Test again and add the next chemical if still necessary
 - Repeat if needed

Chlorine

If you have an automatic chlorinator, adjust chlorine level up or down by using the dial or panel on the device. Keep it filled with tabs.

If you are using a floating chlorinator, keep it filled with tabs and adjust the openings to disperse more or less.

If you have a saltwater pool (a chlorine generator converts the NaCl salt molecule into chlorine), you still need to measure for and maintain an adequate chlorine level. To adjust chlorine in a salt water pool, adjust the generator. In some instances, you may need to add salt.

Shocking

Organic matter will build up in the pool with use, wind, rain, and vegetation. A shock treatment oxidizes the organics in the water and helps get rid of sanitizer residue that remains after the sanitizer has done its job.

It is recommended that you shock your pool once a week – more often if you're having problems like cloudy water or slimy surfaces.

Hardness and Stabilizer

Many test strips and kits will show indicators for Hardness (calcium) and Stabilizer (cyanuric acid). While these measures aren't critical for week-to-week maintenance, pool owners should be mindful of them over the season.

Hardness is the measure of calcium in the water. Over time, low water hardness can cause water molecules to pull minerals from surfaces like pool walls and equipment. High hardness levels can result in scaling, particularly along the water line.

Stabilizer, or cyanuric acid, helps to prevent chlorine from dissipating into the air. Low levels may cause you to use more chlorine, and high levels can cause chlorine to be less effective. Many chlorine products contain a stabilizer, but saltwater pools generally benefit from the addition of cyanuric acid.

Remove Debris

Net & Pole. Channel your inner pool boy/girl and use a pole with a skimmer or leaf net to remove leaves, dead insects, and other debris from the water.

Brush & Vacuum (or get a robot!) Some of the debris will fall to the floor of the pool. This is removed with a pool vacuum.

Walls can become slimy or discolored as algae grows and clings to those vertical surfaces, requiring the walls to be brushed. Again, grab that trusty pole, attach a brush head work out your upper body. Vinyl pools should use a nylon brush, while concrete pools will get a better cleaning with a metal brush head.

If keeping up with brushing and vacuuming is too much work, invest in an automatic pool cleaner to do that work for you. It vacuums, climbs walls, and scrubs the water line at the touch of a button.

Skimmers. Regularly empty the skimmer baskets of the debris they catch. Be careful reaching in – spiders, frogs and other critters like to hang out in skimmer baskets.

Circulation (running the pump)

Circulating water with the pump is vital to distribute chemicals throughout the water and push water through the filter for cleaning.

You can't "over circulate", although your electric bill pay tell you otherwise. We recommend that you run your pump a minimum of one hour per day for every ten degrees of temperature (8 hours a day when it's 80 degrees). If your water doesn't stay clear, increase that length.

Finally, check and empty the pump baskets (also called strainers) frequently to maximize flow.

Filters

Filters removing undissolved dirt and particles from the water by trapping them as water is pumped through the filter media. These particles eventually build up to a point where water flow is restricted. So it's essential to maintain and clean the filters.

Sand filters must be backwashed when the pressure builds up. Turn the filter valve to backwash and watch the sight glass, keeping it open until the water is clear. Turn the valve to rinse for 30 seconds after backwashing, then back to the filter setting for normal operation.

If you have cartridge filters, these should be cleaned periodically per manufacturer recommendations.

Troubleshooting

Even the most meticulous pool owners experience troubles from time to time, and additional products are needed to return to clean, sparkling water. Here are a few things that you may experience:

Colored water. Green or yellow water generally means algae has bloomed. If elevating the chlorine level doesn't remedy it, a supplemental algicide may be used.

Cloudy water. Cloudy water usually has a cause – poor filtration, high pH, inadequate shocking. If fixing the root cause doesn't work, a clarifier can restore clear water.

Stains. High iron, copper, manganese or other metals can create brown or green stains on pool surfaces. Black algae makes a dark, blotchy stain. We can walk you through some simple tests to determine the source of the stain and how to treat it accordingly.