

MAKE A BIG SPLASH THIS SUMMER

A backyard swimming pool can be a joy to own - especially on those really hot and humid days. By keeping to a consistent maintenance schedule and following strict safety guidelines, your pool will provide hours of enjoyment cool relief from summer's heat.

To keep your pool at its best and your family safe this summer, the Ontario Real Estate Association offers the following tips.

Safety first

Although a pool is fun, fun, fun, it can also be dangerous. Each year a number of children drown in backyard swimming pools so attention to safety is critical. Before beginning your swimming season, review the importance of strict safety guidelines with every member of the family. Be sure everyone knows the rules and informs any guests of those rules too. You may even want to consider taking a pool safety course from your local Red Cross. Here are some pool safety guidelines from Health Canada.

- Check with your municipality to find out the rules for putting up a fence around your pool.
- Build a fence and a gate that will keep children away from your pool.
- Keep the gate locked at all times.
- ALWAYS have an adult watching children in and around the pool.
- Children under the age of 3 and children who cannot swim must wear a life jacket or PFD (personal floatation device).
- Send children to swimming and water safety lessons.
- Make sure lifesaving equipment and a first aid kit are handy.
- Take a course on pool safety, first aid and lifesaving skills (such as CPR).
- Have emergency phone numbers listed at the telephone closest to the pool.
- Make sure toys, garden furniture and tools are not near the pool fence. Children can climb up on these things to get into the pool.

To learn more about water safety and learn to swim programs, please call your local Canadian Red Cross Society, or the local Branch Office of the Lifesaving Society.

Sparkling water

Keeping your pool crystal clear and sparkling does not need to be a challenge. A proper maintenance schedule can make the chore of pool maintenance a breeze.

- Use a pool leaf skimmer to remove any floating debris.
- Frequently check and clear the drainer baskets in the skimmer and pump for excess debris.
- Vacuum the pool at least once a week or more especially following a heavy rainstorm. Some pool owners prefer to use an automatic pool vacuum that remains in the pools at all times. With this device, manual vacuuming is rarely required.

If you are vacuuming the pool yourself, begin by brushing down the walls from top to bottom. If your pool surface is vinyl, you can clean the "bathtub ring" with a vinyl pool cleaner and a sponge.

- Keep your filter clean by rinsing it with a garden hose. A clean filter will ensure proper circulation and flow of water through the pool jets.
- Clean your deck area by using a garden hose and direct the water away from the pool to keep dirt from getting into your clean pool.

- Depending on your type of pool, you will need to test your water and add the correct balance of chemicals to keep your water safe, hygienic and clear. Your local pool store will test your water free of charge and recommend the proper chemicals you will need.
- Many pool owners prefer to hire a professional pool maintenance company to provide weekly cleaning and inspections. Prices vary depending on your service contract.
- Although it is relatively easy for a homeowner to open up the pool for the season as well as close it in fall, pool maintenance companies will take care of it for you for a fairly reasonable price.

Take the time to learn about pool safety and maintenance and you will make a big, safe splash this summer.

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