THE HOT TUB REPORT

FOAMY HOT TUB WATER: TROUBLESHOOTING FLOWCHART

USE THIS GUIDE WHEN FOAM APPEARS ON THE WATER SURFACE, ESPECIALLY WHEN THE JETS ARE RUNNING.

Foam forms when oils, lotions, detergents, and other contaminants (surfactants) mix with air and jet agitation. Foam means your water has excess contaminants.

WATER SHOULD BE:
- ☑ Clear
- ☑ Odor-Free
- ☑ Properly Balanced

1 WHAT FOAM MEANS

Foam forms when surfactants—oils, lotions, detergents, and other organics—mix with air and jet agitation.

These contaminants reduce surface tension, allowing bubbles to form and stay.

Foam is not usually dangerous, but it means your water contains contaminants your filtration or sanitizer system is not fully removing.

2 COMMON CAUSES OF FOAMY WATER

A. BATHER PRODUCTS & OILS
- ☑ Lotions, deodorants, makeup, hair products
- ☑ Natural body oils and sweat
- ☑ Laundry detergent in swimsuits
- ☑ Sunscreen and tanning oils

Most common sources of foam-causing surfactants.

B. WATER CHEMISTRY PROBLEMS
- ☑ Low calcium hardness
- ☑ High TDS (old water)
- ☑ Low sanitizer
- ☑ High pH or alkalinity

When chemistry is off, foam forms faster and lasts longer.

C. FILTRATION ISSUES
- ☑ Dirty filters
- ☑ Filters older than 12–24 months
- ☑ Not enough filtration time
- ☑ Oils clogging the pleats

If the filter can't remove contaminants, they stay in the water and create foam.

D. BIOFILM IN PLUMBING

Biofilm produces organic waste that behaves like a surfactant.

If foam returns quickly after cleaning, biofilm is likely.

E. OLD OR HEAVILY CONTAMINATED WATER
- ☑ High TDS (old water)
- ☑ Heavy bather load
- ☑ Organic buildup
- ☑ Infrequent water changes

Over time, contaminants accumulate and cause persistent foam.

3 HOW TO FIX FOAMY WATER

STEP 1 TEST & BALANCE WATER
Check and adjust:
- ☑ pH: 7.2 – 7.8
- ☑ Alkalinity: 80–120 ppm
- ☑ Calcium Hardness: 150 – 250 ppm
- ☑ Sanitizer: In range

Balanced water helps reduce foam formation.

STEP 2 DEEP-CLEAN FILTERS
- ☑ Rinse thoroughly
- ☑ Soak overnight in filter cleaner
- ☑ Rinse again before reinstalling
- ☑ Replace filters if older than 12–24 months

Dirty filters are a top cause of foam.

STEP 3 SHOCK THE WATER
- ☑ Shock oxidizes oils, lotions, and organics
- ☑ Use the correct shock for your sanitizer system
- ☑ Run jets with cover open for 20–30 minutes

Shock breaks down contaminants.

STEP 4 ADD ENZYMES

Enzymes break down oils and lotions that shock doesn't fully remove.

Great for families, heavy users, or sunscreen-heavy environments.

Helps prevent oils from causing foam.

STEP 5 ADD OIL-ABSORBING SPONGE

These products help collect surface oils and reduce foam.

Helps remove oils floating on top.

STEP 6 USE DEFOAMER ONLY TEMPORARILY

Defoamer collapses bubbles quickly but does not remove the cause.

Use only for short-term relief.

STEP 7 DRAIN, PURGE & REFILL

If foam returns after cleaning & shocking:
- ☑ Purge the plumbing
- ☑ Drain completely
- ☑ Clean shell & filter bay
- ☑ Refill with fresh water
- ☑ Rebalance chemistry

This resets the water and removes deep contamination.

4 HOW TO PREVENT FOAM

A. SMART SOAKING HABITS
- ☑ Shower before soaking (no soap residue)
- ☑ Use a dedicated swimsuit rinsed in plain water
- ☑ Avoid lotions, deodorants, and makeup before soaking
- ☑ Keep drinks out of the tub

B. ROUTINE MAINTENANCE
- ☑ Shock weekly
- ☑ Rinse filters weekly
- ☑ Deep-clean filters monthly
- ☑ Drain every 3–4 months (or sooner if water quality declines)
- ☑ Purge plumbing every drain cycle

Consistency prevents buildup.

QUICK REFERENCE

IDEAL RANGES (Most Chlorine Hot Tubs)

pH	7.2 – 7.8
Total Alkalinity	80 – 120 ppm
Calcium Hardness	150 – 250 ppm
Free Chlorine	3 – 5 ppm*

*Follow your sanitizer manufacturer's range.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Foam is caused by oils, lotions, detergents, and other contaminants—not just unbalanced pH.

Test and balance your water, clean filters, shock, and use enzymes to break down organics. If foam keeps returning, drain, purge, clean, refill, and rebalance for the most effective solution.

NOTE: Always follow product instructions and test your water regularly. | When in doubt, consult a hot tub professional.