

Debunking Salt Water Myths for Home Buyers

by AQUA Editors December 2015

Lonza, one of the largest chemical manufacturers in the pool and spa industry, has announced mid-year results from its consumer campaign to draw attention to and correct misperceptions of saltwater pools.

As the economy improves, so does the interest in higher priced homes, or those with extra touches of luxury. Higher end home sales, those of \$1 million or more, rose 7.8% in March of this year. But even for those with less to spend, a home with an existing in-ground pool is an attractive incentive. This is especially true when you consider that the cost for installing even a small pool can be between \$10,000 and \$15,000.

As a real estate advisor, having the right information for your clients, and being able to answer their questions about the benefits, work and cost of a pool, may just be the tipping point for that sale. As an expert judge on NBC's "American Dream Builders," host of a number of HGTV shows like "Designed to Sell," and having grown up with an in-ground chlorine pool myself, I am certainly familiar with maintenance and buyer/homeowner demand for the latest and greatest. Many people feel that that latest and greatest includes a switch to salt water chlorine generators, and believe that salt-water pools are superior to traditional chlorine. This is not actually the case. Both types of water sanitization are effective, but each form requires different care.

There are a number of common misconceptions when it comes to traditional chlorine and salt-water pools. It is a common belief that traditional chlorine is harmful. Many people do not understand that salt-water generators turn salt into chlorine in their pool, and that chlorine is the most effective way to keep the pool safe and clean. Here are a couple of other myths that it would be good to know when talking with your clients about pool ownership:

1. Salt-water pools require less maintenance.

No! This is a really dangerous myth, and can lead to an unsanitary and highly unsafe pool. A salt-water pool requires the same maintenance as a traditional chlorine pool. Additionally, just like the effects to a conventional chlorine pool - sunlight, rainfall, bather load, phosphates and other mineral levels can affect the performance of a salt water system. Pool water - no matter if it's a salt pool or traditional chlorine pool - needs to be tested, balanced, shocked and adjusted on a regular basis for optimal safety and preservation. Furthermore, salt-water generators require regular cleaning to prevent calcium build up that can damage the generator itself - resulting in a surplus of bacterium not undergoing proper sanitization.

2. A salt-water pool is chlorine-free.

The other name for a salt-water generator is a salt-water chlorinator. The generator in a salt pool turns salt into the same chlorine used in a traditional pool. Rather than adding a chlorine tab to the pool, you are adding hundreds of pounds of salt, which is then passed through the generator, producing the chlorine you expected to avoid.

3. Salt-water pools are better for the environment.

The run-off from a salt-water pool that enters public sewer systems, rivers, and streams can kill fresh water species, animals and plant life. Some cities even prohibit the discharge from salt water systems into the storm water or sewage systems. In essence, the only environment where salt water is natural and friendly is in the ocean!

4. Salt-water pools will add more resell value to my home.

For those of you who sell on the coast, you know first hand how salinity in the air causes damage to even the finest properties. The same corrosive effects occur in the area surrounding a

salt-water pool. Anything from chain link fences around the pool, to the deck, furniture, ladders, grill, garden equipment and even the flora are in danger. Additionally, some manufacturers of pool products (like pumps, heaters, etc.) will not offer a warranty on the product if you have a salt-water pool due to its proven corrosive nature. Therefore, not only will a salt water pool not add value to your home, you may even be looking at a financial loss when you take into account the money it will take to replace your deck, furniture, grass, etc.

5. Salt-water pools are cheaper than chlorine.

Salt systems require a major upfront and ongoing investment. Just to start, in addition to the cost of the generator and installation, a traditional 20,000-gallon pool, you need: 720 lbs. of salt versus one 35 lbs. bucket of chlorine. Salt systems require an expensive cell replacement every three to five years at a cost of almost \$500 each time. Owners will also see an increase in utility bills due to the running of the pool pump 10-12 hours per day. The cost of replacing cells, maintaining the system, and repairs to damage of the surrounding areas far outweigh any savings from not purchasing chlorine.

6. Chlorine is dangerous for your health and skin.

All you need to say about this myth is that "you drink it everyday." There is no difference between the chlorine in the pool, and what is used to sanitize your drinking water. Therefore, any perceived difference in the "feel" of the water in a salt-water pool is not due to a lack of chlorine. As long as a pool, no matter the type, is properly balanced, cleaned and maintained, it has no harmful effects on your health, skin, eyes or hair.

Tried and true, experts agree that conventional chlorine is still the easiest and most effective way to sanitize a pool. Salt-water pools are not a sure thing, especially when you understand the facts. Selling a home with a pool can be a daunting task, and potential buyers can have tons of questions. Guide them with all the pros and cons before they make the choice between salt or chlorine.

An In-Depth Look into Salt-Water Pools

Many people who live near the coast have experienced the corrosive effects that saltwater can have on their homes and lawns. Some homeowners may not realize that they should prepare for some of the same corrosion issues associated with the ocean when they install a saltwater pool, or convert their existing system to a salt chlorine generator. If you are going to maintain a saltwater pool, be aware of these issues and follow these tips.

Automatic Pool Covers

Many of the main parts of automatic covers are made of metal, which corrodes near salt-water, so it can be tough to keep them in tact.

Significant damage is most likely to occur when water splashes on the cover when it's taken on or off. To prolong its functioning, regularly rinse your pool cover with fresh water from your hose.

Handrail and Ladder Anchors

· Experts say that steel anchors for handrails and ladders in salt pools will typically degrade within four or five years of their installation.

If you are building a new saltwater pool, make sure to use brass anchors instead of steel in order to prevent corrosion.

If you are changing your pool to saltwater, you'll need to spray your anchors and other metal pool surfaces with a corrosion inhibitor to slow down the corrosion process as much as possible.

Vinyl Liner Pool Walls

Pool walls with vinyl liners can corrode very quickly in salt-water if they are made of metal.

If you are building a pool with a vinyl liner and a salt system, do not use metal walls. If you are considering converting to saltwater and have a metal-walled pool, this may not be the best option for you.

Use plastic walls instead. These stand up to salt better and will last longer.

Deck Furniture

Issues with corrosion don't stop at the metals within the pool. Saltwater pools can adversely affect your yard and the furniture surrounding your pool.

Make sure to buy either plastic or wooden furniture for the area around your pool. This will last much longer than metal furniture, which will likely suffer corrosion from the salt.

Spraying additional metal surfaces around your yard with protective enamel should help protect them from corroding.

What Do You Really Know about "Salt or Chlorine" Pools?

1. A salt-water pool is chlorine free.

Salt chlorine generation is simply a different way of producing chlorine. It's merely producing chlorine from salt, rather than adding the chlorine directly to the pool. Pool owners still have to maintain 1-4 parts per million (ppm) of chlorine in the water at all times, per EPA guidelines. If you want a pool that is completely chlorine free, you would have to use Bromine or Baquacil, which are both available from Lonza.

2. A salt-water pool is easier to own.

Pool owners need to understand that a salt chlorine generator only takes the place of the daily disinfection requirement of the pool. It replaces tablets, sticks or whichever chlorine form you would otherwise use for pool water disinfection. Having a salt chlorine generator does not eliminate the necessary ongoing tasks of maintaining and testing pH, alkalinity and calcium. All these other water balances need to be tested and adjusted weekly.

3. With a salt-water pool I won't have to carry hazardous chemicals around.

You won't have to carry chlorine, but you will still need to carry Muriatic acid or other hazardous chemicals required to adjust the pH. Most of these chemicals are much more difficult to handle than modern chlorine options such as poolife MPT Extra tablets or poolife Brite Stix sanitizer. A salt-water pool has a constantly rising pH, and this requires more Muriatic acid use than traditional chlorine. In addition, many pool owners don't realize the sheer volume of salt necessary to operate a salt chlorine generator. 400-600 pounds of salt must be carried and added into the pool just to set it up. After that, the pool owner will still have to carry at least half a dozen 40-pound bags of salt to the pool every year.

4. Having a salt-water pool is less expensive because you don't have to buy chlorine.

Most people save little or no money over a 5-10 year time period. The cost of buying the salt chlorine generator system, maintaining the system, replacing cells, and making repairs normally outweighs any savings. If you add up the costs over time, you will probably realize that a pool owner may spend more on a salt-water pool.

5. The water in a salt-water pool feels better on the skin, hair and eyes.

A salt-water pool is a chlorinated pool, so any difference in the water's feel is not due to chlorine. The perceived difference may be due to the added salt, but these added salt levels have negative effects such as accelerated corrosion of pool equipment and cement, stone and stainless steel surfaces near the pool. The same feel to the water can be obtained by using new, more advanced systems such as poolife Brite Stix sanitizer (which includes a water softening agent) or non-chlorine systems like BAQUACIL or Bromine. Additives like Ultima Endure water conditioner not only make the water feel better, but they also enhance sanitizer performance.



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