

Pool covers

Are you covered?

Whatever the type of pool you have, indoors or outdoors, you will almost certainly benefit from the use of a good quality pool cover. Pool covers are by no means a new idea; the first covers were introduced into the UK over 40 years ago. Their success has been such that pool owners everywhere consider the use of a good quality cover an essential part of their pool accessories.



Save money

The prime function of a so called "solar" cover is to reduce heat loss through evaporation. This applies to indoor and outdoor pools (although more so for outdoor pools due to wind factors). It is estimated that an uncovered outdoor pool may lose an incredible 90% of its heat through evaporation. Therefore if you stop that evaporation, you will save on heat and water loss, pool chemicals, and most of all save money. A good quality heat retention cover used on indoor pools will also reduce humidity and stop condensation almost completely, thus reducing the damage which may otherwise be caused to poolside furnishings and the building structure.

Safety first

The first thing to consider is your list of priorities. Safety will be more of a concern if small children and family pets can access the pool area. Safety covers are available from most SPATA retailers and contractors and in a choice of styles and designs. These range from a simple safety net, which is tensioned over the pool when not in use, to a fully automated system which will completely cover the pool in a matter of minutes, by simply pressing a remote control switch.

Please note, there are no swimming pool covers that are 100% safe and therefore in certain circumstances other measures, such as fences might have to be considered, dependant on each individual case.

Sheet covers

The more elaborate safety covers are made from a tough membrane and are supported by a track system that is installed at the top inside perimeter of the pool or, in the case of new installations, incorporated into the pool wall. The actual cover, when not in use, will either be stored in a specially constructed storage box at the end of the pool, or in purpose built housing which will have been designed for it at the time that the pool was built. This type of cover is designed for both indoor and outdoor use and for both summer and winter. Any rain water which collects on the outdoor cover of this type will have to be removed by a small pump, supplied as part of the installation and which sits on top of the cover when in place over the pool.

Heat retention covers

If access to the pool area is restricted and therefore safety to the pool area is already addressed, other options may be open to you for pool covers. Any pool will benefit enormously from a good quality floating heat retention cover. Heat retention covers should not be confused with 'solar blankets' which are mentioned below. They are designed for pools which would not normally benefit directly from solar energy, due to the fact that they are indoors or located in shady positions.

Most swimming pools in the UK are heated in the same way that we heat our homes, and as we might install cavity or wall insulation in the home, it is imperative that the pool is insulated too. Any type of floating heat retention cover, be it in the form of a foam backed bubble laminate or PVC slatted system, will do a very similar job for you. The foam and bubble types are usually made from non-translucent fabrics, which reduce light penetration and help reduce algae growth.





PVC slatted covers

These covers are fully automated. Most versions are available as a retrofit unit, or as an integral part of the pool, usually being installed in a hidden pit or trough that is specially designed at the planning stage. The slats are available in a choice of colours, solar or translucent. It is not normally considered to be a safety cover, but as an optional extra, it can be supplied with a safety ledge which would offer a degree of safety should a child or household pet fall on it. Another alternative, at the planning stage of your pool, would be to include a built in ledge to support the slats. Your SPATA contractor will be able to advise the best way to go about this.

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Solar blankets

This is probably the most popular type of pool cover sold in the UK today and they are sometimes referred to as bubble covers. The 'solar blanket' is designed for use on outdoor pools to maximise the benefits of free solar energy and more importantly to minimise evaporation losses. This type of cover can be very cost effective and can also be used on indoor pools, especially where there is a lot of glass. The cover will work for you by transmitting the sun's rays through specially sealed air cells that float on the surface. It will retain most of the absorbed heat, increasing the pool temperature by up to 12o C in the season. These covers are available from most SPATA contractors and retailers and are offered with a range of edge finishes. Some blankets include a specially designed leading edge flotation system.

This is particularly useful if the blanket is to be handled by one person, as it will keep the front edge of the blanket totally buoyant and will generally add to the life expectancy of the product. Solar blankets are made from polyethylene, or polypropylene are usually blue in colour although some manufacturers offer black and clear as an alternative. The latest technology includes an aluminium heat shield on the underside of the cover and is designed to retain more heat in the pool. Most blankets are available in varying thicknesses and weights but the most popular is the 400 micron quality.

Reel Systems

If your choice of pool cover is to be of the manual variety, then you will almost certainly require a pool cover reel. It is hard these days to imagine how one would take a cover on and off without such a device. Most cover manufacturers make a range of reels and these can be operated either by a simple winding mechanism, such as a crank handle or with a steering wheel, or for a greater investment, by the push of a button on a remote control hand set.

Winter Covers

When the swimming season is finally over, for those with outdoor pools, it is time to prepare your pool for winter. Most cover manufacturers make a range of winter debris covers and these are available from SPATA contractors and retailers. A good winter debris cover will reduce the damage that could be caused by autumn leaves and other nasty winter debris such as litter and dead insects entering the skimmers and filtration system. The covers are also usually made from polypropylene or polyethylene, which allow the rainwater to seep through whilst keeping most debris out. They are made slightly larger than the size of your pool and are tensioned with a series of springs and fixing pins which are completely removable when the pool is reopened in the spring.

An alternative type of winter cover is one made from PVC sheeting, secured by water bags around the edge of the pool. It completely seals off the pool for the winter so that light is prevented from entering the pool and causing algae growth.

