THE POOLDOC METHOD / HOMEOWNER EDITION

Poolside Chemistry

Simple water chemistry. Better pool care.

You don't need a chemistry degree to take care of your pool. Start with **two jobs** and **three tests**. A few minutes of regular attention can help prevent algae and protect your plaster.

THE BIG THREE • YOUR WEEKLY CHECK

FREE CHLORINE	pH	TOTAL ALKALINITY
3–5 ppm	7.4–7.8	90–110 ppm
Warm-season target*	Aim for balance	Your pH buffer

** Chlorine needs vary with stabilizer (CYA). These are Pooldoc's general working targets.*

01 SANITATION
Chlorine controls algae and kills harmful bacteria.

02 WATER BALANCE
pH and alkalinity help protect your pool's plaster and equipment.

1 Chlorine: Maintain it. Boost it.

3-inch stabilized tablets
Dissolve slowly to **maintain** chlorine. Use a freely moving, adjustable floater. Tablets also add stabilizer.

Calcium hypochlorite
Granular chlorine **boosts** chlorine quickly. I typically prefer 65%. It also adds calcium over time.

POOLDOC TIP: Rain and heavy swimming can lower chlorine. **Test again after either event.** When algae appears, brushing, filtering and properly elevated chlorine often do the job without algaecides.

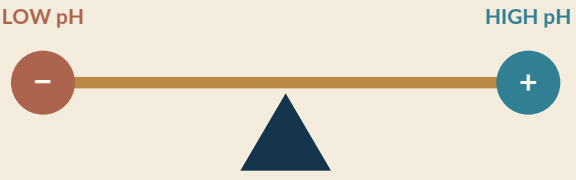
2 pH & alkalinity: The seesaw

Think of alkalinity as the buffer under your pH seesaw. It helps resist sudden pH changes, but it does not automatically correct them.

Too low: Water can etch or pit plaster. Too high: Water may develop calcium scale, especially when calcium hardness is elevated.

My routine: Check alkalinity first. Baking soda raises it; acid lowers both pH and alkalinity; soda ash raises pH. Circulate and retest.

THE pH SEESAW



ALKALINITY = BUFFER

Balance also depends on calcium & temperature

Make the routine simple.

A ROUTINE THAT WORKS

WEEKLY
Test chlorine, pH and alkalinity.

AFTER HEAVY USE
Check chlorine and pH before swimming, after rain or heavy use.

SEASONALLY
Get a full water analysis about quarterly; monthly in summer.

3 Stabilizer: Too much of a good thing

Most 3-inch chlorine tablets contain **cyanuric acid (CYA)**, also called stabilizer. It protects chlorine from sunlight, but it accumulates with continued tablet use. High CYA can make chlorine less effective at sanitizing unless free chlorine is increased.

Pooldoc tip: Adjust tablet use as demand drops in cooler weather. Your pool still needs chlorine year-round.

4 Let the pool store check the rest

Every three months (monthly in summer), bring a sample to a pool store such as Leslie's. Ask about **CYA, calcium hardness, total dissolved solids (TDS), salt** if applicable, and **metals** when staining is suspected.

Some dissolved substances build up over time. Partial water replacement may help when test results warrant it. **Never completely drain a plaster pool without professional guidance.**

5 A few tips from the Pooldoc

BRUSH REGULARLY
Brush trouble spots daily in algae season. Brush the whole pool weekly.

FILTER & CIRCULATE
Clean or backwash your filter as needed. Keep water moving.

EMPTY YOUR BASKETS
Check skimmer and pump baskets for debris and restricted flow.

KNOW YOUR GALLONS
Use your pool volume and chemical labels to make measured adjustments.

COULD CHEMISTRY CHANGES SIGNAL A LEAK?

A leak carries treated water out; fresh autofill water replaces it. **Repeated drops in stabilizer or salt** (without draining, backwashing or overflow) can be a clue. Neither simply disappears through evaporation.

It is not proof of a leak, but paired with unusual water loss, it is worth investigating.

"Clear water doesn't always mean balanced water."

TEST IT, DON'T GUESS.

Safety: Follow every chemical label. Never mix different chlorine products or mix chlorine with acid. Keep chemicals secured, and let the water circulate as directed before swimming.

General guidance for conventional outdoor plaster pools. Water chemistry and sanitizer requirements vary by pool and equipment.