

# Dressing for Cold Weather Exercise

Acting on a new resolution to get fit or maintaining your commitment can seem daunting when the temperature takes a plunge. Walking indoors (on a treadmill, to a walking fitness tape, or on stairs) is always an option, of course. But there's something invigorating and gratifying about being outside.

Whether you're facing temperatures of 40 degrees or 10 below zero, plan to dress for comfort and success.

## Comfort in Layers

Exercise attire has come a long way in providing comfort. Clothing made of innovative, high-tech fabrics can be layered to help keep you dry, warm, and protected from wind, rain, or snow. Layering also helps you avoid getting overheated. The beauty of layering is you can remove or add clothing as needed to keep you comfortable.

Optimize your comfort by choosing the right layers:

- **Base layer.** This is the layer closest to your skin. Choose clothing that fits snugly and is made of material that will quickly move (wick) moisture away from your body. Look for garments made of synthetic or natural fibers such as polyester, polypropylene, and silk. Avoid wearing cotton as your base layer; it traps moisture, draws heat away from your skin, and can leave you feeling cold and clammy.
- **Mid layer.** This layer should provide insulation by trapping body heat in tiny spaces within the fabric. It also helps by moving moisture from the base layer to the outer layer. Mid layer clothing comes in a variety

of materials — fleece, wool, down, polyester, and specially engineered blends of synthetic and natural fibers. Look for features such as underarm zippers and zip-up collars that allow you to release heat if you get too warm. In exceptionally cold temperatures, you may be more comfortable wearing 2 mid layers.

- **Outer layer.** This is your shell, designed to protect you from the elements. Outerwear should be windproof and water-repellent, made of fabric that breathes; nylon, GORE-TEX®, and Supplex® are common examples. If you don't anticipate heavy winds, rain, or snow, you may not need your outer layer, but conditions can change fast, so it's best to have this layer on hand.

## Staying Warm From Head to Toe

The most sophisticated layered clothing will do little to keep you comfortable exercising outdoors if your extremities are unprotected:

- A lot of body heat can escape through your head. Keep it covered with a hat, hood, or mask made of polypropylene, fleece, or wool to help move perspiration away from your head and face.
- Be sure to cover your ears, too; they're susceptible to frostbite.
- Your hands and feet are the farthest points from your heart and the least insulated, which makes them very vulnerable to the cold. Wear glove liners made of polypropylene to wick moisture.

Mittens generally keep your hands warmer than gloves because they retain more of your heat around the fingers. Slip on a pair of polypropylene or wool socks for good insulation and moisture management.

## When You're Too Warm

Regulating body temperature can be tricky in extreme weather conditions, especially when you're active. That's why dressing in layers is important. Body temperature can increase significantly after several minutes of exercise, so don't let yourself get overheated. If you're feeling too warm, peel away layers as needed to regulate your temperature. Tying a jacket around your waist or stuffing mittens and a hat in your pocket is easy. Just keep your layers and accessories handy in case you need to warm up again.

## Walking the Winter Way

No need to stay indoors for your winter workout. Find comfort and enjoyment in your time outside by following the basic principles of layering. ❄️

