

Dressing for the cold

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Learn how to dress properly for the cold so that you stay warm and dry.

Key points

- Be aware of the current weather forecast.
- Dress in layers.
- Adjust clothing for your activity level.

The outdoors in winter is enjoyed most when you are dressed properly. It is also safer when you are dressed properly. Remember: there is no bad weather, just bad clothing. In winter, the best idea is to stay warm and dry. Being too hot makes you sweat, creating moisture. When it is cold outside, being damp is uncomfortable and can be a danger as you will lose body heat more quickly.



Here are a few things to think about when going outside in cold weather.

Be aware of the weather

When the temperature is just above or just below freezing, the chance that you will get wet from snow or freezing rain increases. This is because the air holds more moisture at the freezing point than when the temperature is very cold. When it is very cold it is easier to stay dry. Take a minute to check the weather forecast. Is there precipitation expected? Snow, freezing rain? What is the humidity and temperature? Will the weather be changing while you are out?

Think about what activities you are going to be doing in the cold

Are you going to be very active all the time or on and off? Or are you moving at a steady, leisurely pace. Will you be standing around or sitting a lot? The answer to these questions can

help you decide what to wear and how much you will need to be able to adapt your clothing to changing activity.

Dress in layers

Layers allow you to be more flexible to changing weather conditions and your own activities. Layers create an air space between the skin and the cold and this space is what insulates best. Layers are also looser, allowing for better blood circulation which helps to maintain body temperature.

Three layers:

- Inner (Base) layer: The skin should be covered in a thin layer that helps to move moisture away from the body. Keeping your skin dry helps keep you warm and comfortable. Your inner layer should cover almost your whole body: arms, legs and torso. Polyester and silk, and related modern materials are best. Cotton is a poor choice.
- Middle layer: This is the insulating layer. Wool and fleece work best. The middle layer can be made up of several thin layers.
- Outer layer: This is the water and wind protection layer. Gore-Tex and nylon are best. Get a long coat so that you can sit comfortably. Coats should have high collars and a hood. You should be able to easily ventilate the coat by loosening sleeve ends, opening zippers under the arms and opening a front zipper. This will help get rid of the moisture inside the coat. For very cold temperatures or for kids rolling around in the snow, bib-type snow pants are a good choice.

It is also a good idea to attach tabs to zippers so they can be opened and closed without exposing the hand.

Layering also applies to hands and feet

Wear two pairs of socks – a thin polyester sock against the skin and a thicker sock over that. Boots should be comfortable and not too tight. Tightness will constrict blood flow and make your feet colder. Boots should also have a good sole for grip and stability on slippery or uneven surfaces and should be waterproof. Adjust the legwear and boots, or use a covering such as a gaiter, so that snow cannot enter through the top of the boot.

You can also wear a thin pair of gloves with thicker and waterproof mitts over them. Adjust the sleeves and cuffs so that snow cannot enter.

Scarf, hat and sunglasses

Your head and neck are major sources of heat loss. A hat and a scarf are a must in cold weather. If you are worried about your child wearing a scarf, try a tube scarf. A balaclava or similar cover for the head, ears and face may be best in very cold weather. Sunglasses can protect your eyes from light reflecting off the snow.

Adjust clothing for activity

Remove a layer of clothing just before starting an activity. You will be cold for a moment, but as you start to move you will warm up. This will help you to avoid overheating and dampening the clothing with sweat. Put layers back on when you have finished the activity. If you are standing outside for long periods, try not to stand directly on the snow or cold ground. Even a piece of cardboard under your feet will help keep you warm. The same applies with sitting. Also try to stay out of the wind and you will stay warmer.

Maintain your clothing

When you are back indoors, dry out your clothing for the next time. If moisture stays in the clothing, it will not keep you as warm when you put it back on. Hang up coats and outdoor pants, and put hats, scarves and mitts somewhere warm to dry.

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