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## Staying Warm Outdoors in Winter

### **Wear a hat**

More body heat is lost from the top of your head than anywhere else. Wool is the best fabric to use but almost anything is better than nothing. It's also a good idea to make sure the hat is capable of covering your ears because they are extremely susceptible to the damaging effects of frostbite.

### **Mittens are a must**

When at all possible, you should use mittens before gloves. Mittens are warmer because they trap the heat from your entire hand and not just the fingers like gloves. Gloves are better than nothing though. The hands are also one of the most vulnerable parts of your body to the danger of frostbite.

### **Keep your feet covered**

Avoid cotton socks. Cotton soaks up sweat and moisture causing your feet to become chilled more rapidly. Polypropylene or polyester socks work the best. Wool socks are also a good choice. ALWAYS wear a good pair of insulated boots.

### **Wear loose-fitting clothing**

Tight clothing can restrict the body's blood circulation and can affect your body's ability to keep itself warm.

### **Dress in layers**

The best way to keep your body warm is to dress in layers. This gives you flexibility to add or remove layers, depending on the wea-

ther and your activity. In general the three main layers are wicking, insulating, and weather protection.

### **Wicking Layer**

This is the layer worn next to your skin, usually consisting of silk or polyester long underwear. It is designed to quickly wick moisture away from your skin and toward the outer layers of clothing. When it is warmer or you are exerting yourself and producing a lot of heat, you can wear this inner layer by itself in order to stay cool and dry.

### **Insulating Layer**

The layer is the main insulation layer, having the purpose of making dead air space. This space captures the heat from body and prevents it from escaping into your surroundings. This middle layer includes sweaters, sweatshirts, vests and pullovers, and is made up of wool, down, or synthetic insulations like fleece, pile, bunting, or lamolite. The thicker or loftier the layer the greater its heat-retaining ability. The middle layer should be loose fitting. The middle layer can be composed of more than one garment. For example, if it is cold, a person might wear two wool sweaters or a sweater and a vest.

### **Protection Layer**

The outer layer is a heavy windproof shell that prevents the wind from penetrating into your insulation layer and robbing it of heat. The outer layer should be waterproof but also allow the moisture that is being

wicked away from your body by the inner and middle layers to escape.

### **Wear the right type of fabric**

#### **Avoid cotton**

Cotton traps moisture against your skin and cools you down.

#### **Try silk**

It's tightly woven, but breathable, making it a good insulator. Silk works best as a base layer against your skin.

#### **Try down**

Down is perhaps nature's best insulator. It will keep you warmer than most man-made materials. But, it loses its warming properties if it gets wet.

#### **Try wool**

For centuries, wool has been used as an insulator, providing warmth even when wet.

#### **Try fleece**

Fleece has wool's water repellent properties and down's softness.

### **Eat enough**

Keep your calorie intake high. Winter activities require a lot of energy to perform, as well as to stay warm. Eat foods that are higher in fat content and calories. Warm foods and hot drinks will really warm the soul on a cold day. Your body will actually produce heat also as it burns the fuel you have fed it.

### **Drink liquids**

When it is below freezing the air will draw moisture out of you. If you are dehydrated it is harder for your body to keep you warm. So drink water on a regular basis. And whenever you have a chance, have a hot drink, such as herbal tea or hot chocolate. It will keep your core body temperature up. Avoid alcohol, however, because it actually lowers your body temperature.

### **Consider hand and foot warmers**

These are chemical packets that begin generating heat when unwrapped and exposed to air. They usually work for 8-10 hours. Stick them in your pockets, gloves, and boots to help keep you warm. Avoid direct contact with your skin since they can burn you.

**For more information about the health effects of cold weather, visit the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services website at [www.dhhs.nh.gov](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov) or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [www.cdc.gov/features/winterweather/](http://www.cdc.gov/features/winterweather/).**