

Dressing for our winter hikes

 **Get your body ready** for crisp winter temps by walking outdoors before our winter hikes start. While out, try different clothing to see what's warmest and most comfy

-  **It's all about layers!** Rather than wearing one heavy coat, consider dressing in layers.
- Layers are warmer because air in between the layers acts as insulation.
 - Layers allow you to shed clothes as you exert. (You'll be amazed how warm you'll get hiking through snow and up hills!) For example, you might wear silk or woolen long underwear against your skin (because they "wick"), then layer with a comfy turtleneck, a lightweight fleece, and jacket.
 - Rain pants double well as snow pants when layered over your regular pants.

 **Face/head.**

- Hats that cover your ears are one of the easiest, most effective body-temp regulators. Add warm headbands/ear muffs underneath your hat for extra warmth on really cold days.
- Earrings. On very cold days, metal earrings transmit chill through ear lobes.
- Face. Scarves are great. Also, a thin layer of Vaseline protects sensitive facial skin on very cold days.

 **Wicking material.** Wicking or "quick-dry" clothes are made from material that "wicks" sweat and moisture from your skin and into the fabric before you get chilled.

- We often sweat as we exert in heavy clothes - which then chills us. "Wickers" carry sweat away from skin.
- Wickers also carry away moisture from snow that gets inside your clothes.
- Get double-duty from short-sleeved summer wicking tops by wearing them as your base layer in winter.



 **Dress for comfort.** We hike for fun, not style. Don't worry about re-wearing comfy, warm clothes - or whether they match.

 **Feet.** Feet and hands usually get cold first. Here's how to keep feet toasty.

- For ice... **Because they are so vital to safe winter fun, we now require** winter hikers to have devices that slip onto boots to help on ice. My favorite is MICROspikes by Kahtoola, which provide excellent grip on ice and are very easy to take on and off. Another trusted, less-expensive brand is Yaktrax Pro Traction with coil grips; choose the "Pro" version with the Velcro band so they won't pull off in snow. Try them on with your boots for size. (Take non-slip devices off before driving, to avoid accelerator entanglements.)
- You'll want comfy, waterproof, warm boots with good tread. We've found that our ankle-high waterproof hiking boots are usually toasty enough for day hikes around here. If you want warmer, higher boots, one of the best brands is Sorel Caribou boots with removable liners. I found that www.Campmor.com had the best deal on these at \$89. Make sure the boots are roomy enough so your toes can wiggle.

- For deep snow, keep feet dry by wearing snow pants that fit over your boots. Or wear gaiters, which hook onto or under your boots and cover the space between pants and boots.
- Wiggle room inside boots allows warm blood to circulate and keep toes warm.
- Wicking sock liners underneath wool socks keep feet warm. Also, if snow gets inside boots, liners will wick moisture away from feet and into the sock.
- Chemical warming packs (one-time-use) between sock liners and socks are great! Warmers designed for feet have handy adhesive tape that keeps warmth where you need it.

Gloves/mittens.

- Mittens are warmer than gloves.
- Thin silk glove liners are great to wear under your gloves/mittens - to add that layer of air insulation. They're ultra-thin, so you can take pictures, blow your nose, etc., without exposing hands to the air. Best deals are through www.Campmor.com.
- Chemical warming packs are great to put between your silk liner and glove/mitten.
- Loosen up. Keep liners, mittens, and gloves loose enough for air insulation.

Clothes to avoid:

- Jeans. Jeans transmit cold - especially if they get wet. They also don't dry well, so you'll stay cold if you sweat or get them wet in the snow. You can make jeans more winter-friendly by layering wicking long underwear or "cuddle duds" *under* them or wearing wind pants or rain pants *over* them.
- Clothes, gloves, and boots that are TIGHT do NOT allow that great layer of insulating air to keep you warm. They also constrict blood flow.
- Cotton, or sweat pants/shirts. Because they absorb moisture, you'll stay cold if they get wet from sweat or snow.

Other clothing tips:

- You don't need to bulk up. Outdoor stores now carry coats that are big on cutting wind and small on bulk.
- Merino wool is a wonderful base layer. It's pricey, but you'll love it. (And it's not itchy.) Check out the selection at Erehwon or Campmor.com.
- Check out silk Cuddle Duds for no-bulk, low-cost wicking warmth under clothes.
- Fleece. We love fleece under our coats, especially thin micro-fleece. Remember fleece DOESN'T CUT WIND when worn as the outer layer.
- Snow pants. We'll be in snow, so it's nice to have snow pants, ski pants, or rain pants layered over other pants. (Discount brands are fine.)

 Hiking poles help tremendously on slippery surfaces and let you determine snow depth. You can find them inexpensively at Target or Walmart.

 Eat breakfast. Just like mom told us, our bodies need fuel to burn to keep us warm.

 Hint: Remember you'll warm up as you exert. So, it helps to be a bit chilly when you start out so you won't be overdressed and sweating 10 minutes into the hike.

Where to get winter gear:

- Most items are available at Erehwon (in Kildeer) and other good outdoor shops. I like Erehwon's knowledgeable, helpful staff (and our group discount).
- But you can pick up a lot of great, warm things (and wicking clothing) at Target's good prices.
- I'm a big fan of www.Campmor.com for best deals and convenient online buying.