

DEBUNKING MYTHS ABOUT STAYING WARM IN WINTER

You don't have to be wandering across the Arctic to suffer from hypothermia; this condition can happen at above freezing temperatures without proper body insulation. Here we will dispel some of the myths surrounding winter clothing and hypothermia.

Clothing

Strenuous activity in the outdoors can warm us up in the short term – but without a proper undergarment made out of a warming material, that effect won't last for long, and if sweat builds on your body and soaks into your clothing you won't be able to keep warm.



In the past, the recommended fabric next to your skin was synthetic or polypropylene. Not any more! The best fabric is merino wool. It wicks moisture away and keeps you warm. Good manufacturers of merino wool clothing sell a variety of thicknesses, to match the

weather you will be in. The base layer should be fitted and not loose; if there are gaps between the fabric and your skin, the cold can sneak in. Go for your actual size for base layers.

The next layer can be synthetic – fleece is a good option.

The outer layer should be wind and/or waterproof, again, depending on where you are and the days' weather forecast.

Hats

There is a long-standing myth that we lose 40-50% of our heat through our head. That's simply not true; we may lose about 10%, as that's roughly the percentage of body mass your head is – and we only lose heat through our head if the rest of our body is wrapped in thermal layers and it is the only exposed part. Regardless of that, your head should not be the only exposed body part, or you will lose body heat! Wrap your head in a warm wool toque!

Socks

If one pair of socks keeps your feet warm, are two twice as good? NO! Your boots are fitted for one pair of socks. The second sock compresses your foot, cutting off circulation, and may make your boot too tight. A good wool sock, properly fitted, will do the trick.



Shivering is the first sign of hypothermia

Another myth debunked! Muscle slowing is the first sign, and the forearms are often the first to become sluggish. A quick assessment: touch the tip of your thumb to the tip of each finger. Assuming you could do this when it isn't cold, a full range of motion means your muscles haven't locked up (yet). If you can't touch your pinky and ring finger, stronger hypothermic symptoms (shivering, teeth chattering and clumsiness) will soon follow.

