



# Selecting Active Wear



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of activity, its level of impact, your body type, and where you will be active (indoors or outdoors). Cotton, cotton blends, and moisture-wicking fabrics provide moisture absorbency, ventilation, and comfort. Avoid fabrics such as nylon, which traps perspiration on your body.

**Level of impact associated with various activities.**

Low	Medium	High
Walking	Skating	Running
Weight training	Bike riding	Aerobics
Yoga	Spinning	Softball
	Tennis	Soccer
	Golf	Horseback riding
	Gardening	Basketball

Socks that are too small will restrict the foot’s range of motion. Sock sizes are usually based on shoe sizes but are sometimes sized small, medium, and large.

If your sock becomes wet during an activity, your foot will slip. It is important to have socks with moisture wicking fibers to help pull moisture away from the foot. New fibers have been developed that provide comfort and safety when engaging in indoor and outdoor activities. Be sure that the sock and shoe combination are compatible by trying them on together before purchase.

**Selecting the Correct Shoes for the Activity**

Proper athletic shoes are the most important part of workout gear. They can be expensive but worth the investment to insure long-term safety. Athletic shoes are designed for specific activities. Select your shoes depending on the type of activity in which you will be participating.

Running shoes are designed for running and walking outside. The shoes should be comfortable and absorb shock. The outer sole has a tread layer to provide traction, and the midsole provides cushioning. The upper part of the shoe may be made of leather or a lightweight, breathable synthetic fiber. The tongue of the shoe should be padded to protect and cushion the foot from the laces. The heel area should be firm and inflexible to control the motion of the foot. Running shoes come in different shapes. The shape of the shoe is designed for the

**Shoes and Socks**

The proper shoe is the most important item to consider for physical activity. Shoes vary in tread and padding according to the activity and personal style. Athletic shoes are designed for running, walking, and aerobics. Cross-training shoes are designed for gym or indoor activities such as using weights, elliptical machines, and aerobics. The higher the impact, the more protection is needed in a shoe. Your running style (how your foot contacts the surface) influences the type of shoe needed to protect your ankles and feet.

Socks prevent blisters and other irritations to your foot. Like shoes, socks should be selected according to the impact of the activity. Socks made for high impact activities have additional padding, especially to the heel and forefoot areas. Socks that are too large will bunch, causing discomfort and possibly blisters.



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way the foot hits when contacting the ground (pronation), and the type of arch (high, low, or normal). Bring a worn pair of athletic shoes with you when shopping for a new pair. The sole of the worn shoe can provide information for selecting the best type of fit for your foot and running style.

Cross-training shoes have wide cushioned soles for lateral movement and to prevent ankle injuries. They are designed for use in the gym, where you may be walking, lifting weights, using fitness machines, or participating in aerobics or tennis. Leather uppers provide extra support for ankle, and synthetic mesh uppers reduce perspiration.

Try shoes on before purchasing, and wear athletic socks when trying them on. Sizes will vary among brands and shoe styles. Have both feet measured for fit while standing. If one foot is larger than the other, fit shoes to the larger foot. It is best to fit shoes at the end of the day or when your feet are the largest. For runners, consider purchasing shoes a half-size larger to compensate for swelling.

What is a proper fit? There should be a finger width between the longest toe and the end of the shoe. The ball of the foot should fit snugly in the widest part of the shoe, but not be too tight. The heel should be comfortable and not rub. Walk or run around the store to check for comfort and fit. Cross-training shoes should hold your foot in place with no slippage. Most cross-training shoes are

designed for 60 to 80 hours of activity. After that point, the cushioning is compromised and not providing the needed protection for your feet. Check for the sole to bend at the ball, not the arch.

Test for the “rolling motion” of the shoe by poking the shoe. Place the shoe on a table. Press a pencil into the heel of the shoe. The toe should rise off the table. Likewise, if you press on the toe, the heel should rise.

Select shoes for activity and fit, not style. Do not expect the shoes to stretch to fit you correctly. Only purchase shoes if they fit your feet when you put them on in the store.

After you are finished with your athletic shoes, consider recycling your shoes. Check with your local store selling athletic shoes or local extension office about recycling opportunities.

## **Undergarment Support**

For women, a sports bra is an essential piece of equipment. Select a sports bra for comfort, fit, and support. The type of bra selected will vary according to the level of impact of the activity and your bust.

Many professional athletes often wear moisture-wicking undergarments for support and comfort. Brands such as Under Armour® and PlayDry® are worn in extremely hot and cold conditions to carry perspiration quickly away from the skin to absorbent outer layers to prevent chafing.



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## Outerwear

Select clothing that allows freedom of movement for the activity selected. Be comfortable in the clothing and maintain a sense of self-esteem. Snugly fitting spandex shorts may be appropriate for bike riding but would be uncomfortable and lead to chafing if worn in a yoga class, not to mention self-consciousness when doing certain positions. Loose fitting clothing may provide a greater range of motion but can get caught on the gym equipment.

Many physical activities require only a t-shirt and comfortable shorts or pants. It is often a good idea to wear layers of clothing that can be removed as you warm up. When active outdoors, keep in mind that lighter colors reflect light and tend to be cooler than darker clothing. Lighter colors and reflective fabrics also increase visibility when outside.

## Swimwear

Swim suits are worn for aquatic activities (lap swimming and water aerobics). Select a swimsuit that is comfortable, allows freedom of movement, and provides the appropriate coverage and support for your body. Select a swimsuit in a color and/or pattern that compliments your coloring, figure, and style. In recent years, competitive swimming has moved toward unitards or full body suits that reduce friction in the water and provide added support.

When trying on a swimsuit; stretch and jump around. Be sure that you can move comfortably in the suit. Make sure the suit is not pinching you, and that it provides the needed support, especially in the bust area. The leg styles in women's suits vary from a brief/boxer short leg to a high cup. Choose the leg style providing the most movement and that preserves your self-esteem.

If you spend a lot of your water activity in a pool, consider investing in a swim suit made of chlorine resistant fabric since it will last longer. To maximize the life of your swimsuit, get it wet before entering the pool. Your suit will absorb less of the highly chlorinated water. Rinse the swimsuit in cold water immediately after leaving the pool and hand wash with swimsuit cleaner or mild soap. Swimsuits are easily damaged by the sun, chlorine, and friction, snagging easily when rubbed along the side of the pool.



## Accessories

Many accessories are available for practical purposes. Headwear provides needed protection from the sun and cold. Thermal headbands, neckbands and hats help to maintain body temperature in cold weather. Headbands and hats are used to protect eyes from perspiration.

Reminder: Avoid wearing jewelry when working out. Hanging jewelry can get tangled and caught in machines, and rings can be caught or bent.

## Stay Clean

After each use, clean your workout clothing. Let athletic shoes air out, too. A warm, moist environment (such as a gym bag) is a perfect place for fungi and bacteria to grow.

Since most of the active wear includes spandex or spandex blends, be sure to wash according to manufacturer instructions or use cold water and a gentle cycle in the washer. Avoid chlorine and machine drying.

Purchasing expensive clothing is not necessary for physical activity. However, it is worth investing in proper athletic shoes and support clothing, such as socks and sports bras, to prevent injury and to help you enjoy your chosen activity and stay active.

## Active Wear for Cold Weather

Being comfortable is important when being active. Cold weather can make being active and comfortable more challenging. Cold weather activities require dressing in layers.

Cold weather active wear should consist of three layers. The layer next to your skin should provide support. The second layer should provide warmth, and the outer layer should protect against wind and rain.

### **Being Seen**

During cold months, daylight hours are reduced, leaving less time for being active outdoors. Consider color and reflective materials when selecting the outer layer. Women's outerwear often is available in a variety of light colors, but men's outerwear tends to be darker. Look for reflective materials on outerwear or add reflective tape to the garments or accessories.

A fabric finish has been developed that contains reflective materials, making a person visible in car light; the brand name is *illumiNITE*®. The finish is used on jackets, vests, and other clothing items for joggers, cyclists, and workers.

3M makes *Scotchlite*™, a reflective tape used by manufacturers for piping, trims, patches, and graphic designs. *Scotchlite*™ garments should be cleaned according to manufacturer instructions. Avoid dry cleaning. *Scotchlite*™ and other reflective tape are available in bulk from internet suppliers for home use.

Belts, wrist bands, ankle bands, and helmets are also available to increase visibility. Some products incorporate reflective materials while other may contain LED blinking lights.



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### **Outerwear Accessories**

Hats, thermal headbands, and neckbands help maintain body temperature during cold weather. Up to 40 percent of your body heat can be lost from the neck up during cold weather. A hat or head band should not inhibit your ability to hear or be aware of your surroundings. Some neckbands have a pocket that will hold chemical warming bags.

Your hands and feet will feel the cold first. Select thermal gloves and socks to keep warm. Chemical warmers can be added to gloves and shoes for extended periods of exposure to cold temperatures.

Remember that properly fitted socks can be as important as the right type and fit of shoe. For cold weather consider layering socks. The first layer would be a



thin, tight-fitting sock made of moisture wicking materials. The second layer should be a thicker sock made from a moisture wicking fabric, wool or wool-blend that will create an area of insulation.

### **Adding Warmth**

Sweat pants, sweat shirts, and long sleeve t-shirts can add warmth between the inner and outer layer of clothing. The sweat clothes should fit loosely, providing space for insulation. Cotton and cotton-blend fabrics provide absorption of perspiration.

### **Support Layer**

No matter the temperatures, a support layer is needed for comfort and prevention of injuries. Many athletes, such as football players, wear moisture-wicking undergarments that cling to the body and carry moisture away from the skin. Under Armour® and PlayDry® are popular brand names for fabric and clothing lines designed for warmth, support, and comfort.

Mention or display of a trademark, proprietary product, or firm in text or figures does not constitute an endorsement and does not imply approval to the exclusion of other suitable products or firms.

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