



## EXERCISING IN COLD WEATHER



Winter weather warrants special precautions for anyone who exercises outdoors. Cold exposure can make outdoor activity dangerous or at least uncomfortable for unprepared athletes.

The first line of defense against cold exposure is dressing appropriately for conditions. Other factors that can negatively affect your ability to handle cold temperatures can include inadequate nutrition, dehydration, alcohol consumption, certain medications and health conditions such as diabetes and heart disease, which can significantly decrease a person's ability to exercise outdoors in the cold.

To improve your comfort and safety while exercising in the cold, the *American College of Sports Medicine* recommends the following:

- **Layer Clothing**  
Several thin layers are warmer than one heavy layer. Layers are also easier to add or remove and thus, better regulate your core temperature. The goal is to keep the body warm and minimize sweating and avoid shivering.
- **Cover your Head**  
Your head should be covered while exercising in the cold, because heat loss from the head and neck may be as much as 50 percent of the total heat being lost by your body.
- **Cover your Mouth**  
To warm the air before you breathe it, use a scarf or mask. Do this especially if breathing cold air causes angina (chest pain) or if you are prone to upper respiratory problems.
- **Stay Dry**  
Wet, damp clothing, whether from perspiration or precipitation, significantly increases body-heat loss.
- **Keep your Feet Dry**  
Use a fabric that will wick perspiration away from the skin. Polypropylene, wool or other fabrics that wick moisture away from the skin and retain insulating properties keep the body warm when wet.
- **Stay Hydrated**  
Dehydration affects your body's ability to regulate body heat and increases the risk of frostbite. Fluids, especially water, are as important in cold weather as in the heat. Avoid consuming alcohol or beverages containing caffeine, because these items are dehydrating.

