

Staying warm in winter's grip

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The temperatures have dropped, and there isn't much sign of them rising any time soon. Staying warm when the thermometer is barely above 30 degrees can be hard — throw in the extra element of wind or rain, and the cold cuts through you like a knife.

■ Start with figuring out how active you'll be once you're outside, and then adjust what you're wearing accordingly.

Lifestyle turned to the people who know how to stay warm when it's cold outside for advice on keeping toasty when out and about. Those interviewed work outside and spend time outside, and the majority said that layers are key.

However, there is one important factor when layering: "Whatever is layered must be dry," said Steve Santos, a local self-employed bricklayer.

"If there is anything moist at all, you will be chilled to the bone throughout your entire body," Santos said. "If there is a wet layer, remove it."

Cover exposed skin surfaces to protect yourself from frostbite. If you've been exposed for too long, warm up gradually by wrapping or placing the cold skin next to warm skin, Santos said.

What you wear to an outside event in the middle of January can transform a fun winter activity to a chilly, wet, and possibly even dangerous ordeal.

But planning ahead is one of the most important things, said Jason Stevenson of Lancaster. An avid hiker and backpacker, Stevenson is the former editor of Backpacker magazine and wrote "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Hiking and Backpacking."

You don't have to buy expensive designer ski-wear to stay warm and dry in winter, but investing a little thought into how you cover up can provide big payoffs, Stevenson said.

"The best thing is to assess your level of activity before you head out," Stevenson

said. "There is a difference between shoveling, skiing and walking to market."

■ Top it off.

There's an old adage that if your feet are cold, you should put on a hat, said Brian Nesbitt, a local outdoor sports enthusiast. "When you get too hot, take (the hat) off for a bit; when you get too cool, pop it back on."

According to Stevenson, the saying that you lose 90 percent of your body heat through your head may be true to a point.

"Usually it's the only thing that is not covered," Stevenson said. "So I am always sure to wear a hat, even if it's just a baseball cap."

■ Layer it on thick.

"When it comes to your body, think layers," Stevenson said. "Try a light polyester shirt first, then a vest, sweater, or fleece topped by a weather-resistant coat. You can remove and add layers as your body temperature changes."

For pants, rather than sporting a heavy pair, Santos suggested donning a set of lightweight non-cotton long Johns and wind or athletic pants.

Cotton components of a winter warm wardrobe will not be as effective because cotton holds moisture and does not dry out easily.

An inexpensive pair of wool pants — though probably not the most stylish article of clothing — is great on frigid days over long Johns, Stevenson said.

"You would be surprised what you can find at consignment or secondhand stores," Stevenson said. "Wool pants will keep you insulated and warm."

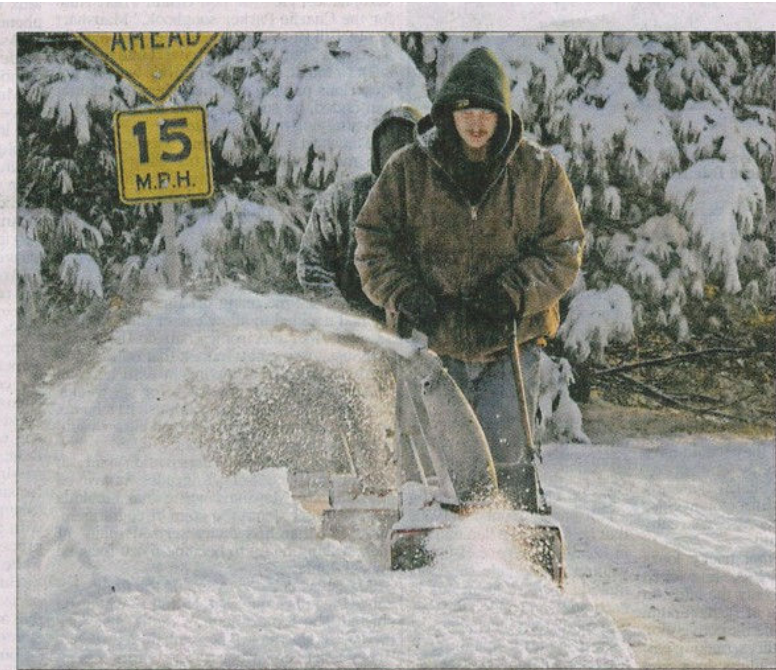
Wool also holds moisture away from

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Land's End



Convertible gloves, like these from Land's End, have a flap that can flip over the fingers to provide extra, mittenlike coverage.



Blaine T. Shaban / Staff

From layers of clothes to hoods to gloves, two workers do what they can to stay warm without overheating while snowblowing walkways earlier this month along Roosevelt Boulevard in Manheim Township.

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the skin if you begin to sweat.

"Sweat is the enemy," Stevenson said. "It's a great thing in the summer, but in the winter it will chill you to the bone."

■ Smitten for mittens. If you wrap your fingers in too-tight leather gloves, circulation is reduced and your hands will cool faster than if you have some wiggle room.

"Mittens are typically warmer than gloves because the heat generated from your fingers is shared, rather than stuck in a tunnel of fabric," Nesbitt said.

Stevenson agreed, saying that the skin-to-skin contact is important because it helps the fingers to heat each other.

"It's like having four space heaters lined up together instead of in different rooms," Stevenson said.

Even the convertible mittens work well for this, Ste-

venson said, because they give you the ability to handle things with your fingers, but have the warmth of a mitten.

Another easy way to keep the blood pumping to hands and fingers is to grab a pair of ski poles when you head out for a walk, said Nesbitt. They help get blood circulating to the hands, and can stop a fall on slippery terrain.

■ Protect your feet. Those people who bundle their feet in huge wool socks plus a pair (or two or three) of cotton ones may actually be doing more harm than good, said Stevenson.

"Like fingers, your toes need to be able to move freely," Nesbitt explained. "Wiggle room allows for better circulation. If they are crammed inside too much fabric, circulation is impeded and the blood simply can't get around to warm them."

Since cotton holds water and perspiration, wear only

one pair of synthetic or wool liner socks, he said. They take up almost no room in boots and are usually quite inexpensive.

■ Quench your thirst. Staying hydrated is also an important part of staying warm and it can be a cold drink or a hot drink that will help your body to work the way it should, Stevenson said.

"Your body needs water to keep your blood pumping, and people tend to become dehydrated in the winter without knowing," he explained.

"It can be very dry in the winter and if you are out for the day being active, you are still depleting the water in your system," Stevenson said.

Take along a drink and be sure to sip it throughout whatever you are doing, Nesbitt suggested.

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