

Song In The Woods

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Dressing for the Cold

One of the biggest mistakes that people make in the winter is over dressing. Usually, if one is active, the amount of clothing one need's is surprisingly minimal. It is far better to start out a little cool and work to warm up, than it is to start out warm and end up sweating. As we all know, sweat means wet, and wet means cold. You usually won't notice the cold part of sweat until your activity or fuel (food) wears down. Once your clothing is wet, the dampness sucks the heat away and once you cool down it's very hard to warm back up without changing into dry clothes. So when you dress for winter conditions, keep this in mind. When I travel out in winter, I consciously dress in layers. It does no good to put heavy coats on when you go out to exercise. In fact, by using a layer system you can effectively control your heat so that you don't sweat and thus don't get wet. Remember that we loose a lot of our heat through the head and neck area and you can do a lot with that. I always try to set myself up so that I can take things off or put things on easily by using pockets and packs in an effective manner. I also mindfully start out a little cool so that I don't have to stop right away to layer down. It is important that people know that it's ok to stop and change layers. It is far better to take a little time now to layer than spend lots of time later trying to get warm. Keep snacks handy so you can keep the furnace supplied with fuel and of course drink **lots**.

Also remember that in order for your body to work well at keeping warm and healthy you must feed it and hydrate it. Your body can only work as long as there is fuel and it's very important that it have enough good fluids to flush toxins and pump needed supplies where they need to be. Most experienced winter travelers figure that 4 quarts of non-caffeinated drink is

the minimum a person should be drinking per day. I try to plan my drinks so that I'm not trying to drink 3 quarts at night to get my daily quota. I start by taking a thermos to bed at night, so I can drink when I wake up and start my day hydrating. Cold drinks in the winter are hard to do, so I concentrate on warm or hot drinks. I like to drink lots in the morning and then when I'm active during the day I can space out my drinks. When I get to camp at night I like to drink a lot also, but I slow down toward bedtime and take a thermos to bed with me. I would advise people to start drinking at least one week prior to the trip to get your body up to par.

The only other thing I would add at this point is to not be afraid to go to the bathroom when you need to. It keeps the system clean and allows it to function properly. Many people feel a fear of the cold and so don't want to expose themselves to it. This can lead to bladder and kidney infections and also hinders the functioning of the body.

The number one law of the wild is take care of yourself.