Rock your winter workouts
These expert how-tos, plus high-tech heat gear, will help you cruise through the chilliest conditions.

By GINA DEMILLO WAGNER

You could retreat to the climate control of your gym this winter, but if you brave the same workouts outdoors, science says that you'll end up with a better body. For starters, you'll boost your metabolism the minute you step outside: When you exercise in temperatures below 64 degrees, you increase the amount of calories you burn, according to a study at Maastricht University in the Netherlands. That's because chilly temps trigger something called nonshivering thermogenesis. This means that your body isn't so cold that it's shivering, but behind the scenes, it's stoking the metabolism fire to keep you warm.

You'll also torch more fat. Several studies point to the affect of cold on brown adipose tissue (brown fat), whose main job is to keep you warm. Expose your body to cold, and you'll activate brown fat, which changes unhealthy white fat that collects around your belly, butt, and hips into beige fat, allowing it to burn calories for heat.

Researchers at Northern Arizona University also discovered in an animal study that training in cold weather for a few months increases your VO\textsubscript{2max} (a measure of how fit you are) and running speed. "For most exercise situations, cold is safer and more accommodating than the summer's heat," explains Bill Brewer, the director of exercise science at the Rochester Institute of Technology in New York. "And it lets people work harder and longer."

Best of all, you can get these benefits without feeling as if you're a snowman throughout your session. Here's how to keep comfortable so you can focus on getting a killer workout. →
**get fit**
cold-weather tips

Factor in the wind and the wet
Did a quick temperature check before heading out? Now double-check the forecast for the wind chill and the chance of rain. Forty degrees may not sound so cold, but when you add wind and moisture, it can be frigid—and require either more layers or a shorter jaunt. According to the National Weather Service, frostbite can even develop when skin is exposed to 40-degree temperatures if there are 20-mile-per-hour winds for 30 minutes. See “When Is It Too Cold to Exercise Safely?” (right) for how to decode your forecast.

Layer up
You may be tempted to throw on your heaviest fleece for that outdoor run, but it’s better to wear several thin layers, says Cedric X. Bryant, Ph.D., the chief science officer for the American Council on Exercise. “You’ll trap and warm the air between each layer for an insulating effect,” he says. The outer layer should repel wind and precipitation, while the inner layers should provide warmth. For outer layers, stick with sweat-wicking fabrics like polyester and wool instead of cotton, which soaks up moisture. “Your body loses heat four times faster when exposed to water,” Bryant says; this can rapidly lead to hypothermia. (We’ve got the perfect head-to-toe picks for layering right, on page 66.) As you warm up, you can fine-tune your comfort level by peeling off layers.

Pregame with spice
Eating cayenne pepper an hour before a workout can help you feel warm and boost your burn. “The capsaicin in the chile peppers increases your internal temperature slightly, which will raise the rate at which you burn calories and warm your body slightly,” says Charles Pelitera, an assistant professor of kinesiology and the coordinator of health and wellness at Canisius College in Buffalo. Just sprinkle cayenne on your eggs or avocado toast at breakfast.

INSTANT TRACTION
Turn any pair of sneakers into winter runners by slipping the no-slip Yaktrax Run over them. Spikes and steel coils grip the ice, so you don’t have to worry about anything but moving. ($40, yaktrax.com)

WHEN IS IT TOO COLD TO EXERCISE SAFELY?
With proper gear and adjustments, you can work out in subfreezing temps. The danger of frostbite and hypothermia is highest when the temperature is below 10 degrees and the wind is above five miles per hour. (Check the National Weather Service’s windchill chart at nws.noaa.gov to see your chance of frostbite.) Early signs of hypothermia are weakness, shivering, slurred speech, dizziness, and confusion, notes Cedric X. Bryant of the American Council on Exercise. If you have any of those, get to a warm area for first aid fast.

Put a lid on it
“Old research cited that heat loss through the head amounted to almost half of your body heat,” Pelitera says. “Although recent studies peg it at only about 10 percent, the reality is that any area of the body that is exposed is going to lose heat at a greater rate, so be sure to cover up.” A hat, a scarf, a neck gaiter, and gloves can make a big difference.

Bring a hot-water bottle…
Consider filling your water bottle with H₂O that’s about hot-coffee temperature. “Holding the bottle can keep your hands warm, and consuming the heated water helps maintain your internal temperature,” Brewer says. This also makes your bottle less likely to freeze on the coldest days.

…But don’t overheat
Many avid runners like to use hand-warming packets or stick-on heating pads, which warm you instantly, during winter workouts. But experts caution: Don’t put artificial warmers in places where air doesn’t circulate, like your shoes. “They will cause your feet to sweat prematurely, and because the sweat is not able to evaporate, it will cool your feet and actually make them colder,” Pelitera warns.

Strip quick
Postworkout, remove your sweaty clothes as quickly as possible. “Strip down completely and change your clothes, including your undergarments,” Pelitera says. “Sweat underneath your workout clothes will cause you to become cold at a much quicker rate.”

Photograph by CLAIRE BENOIST