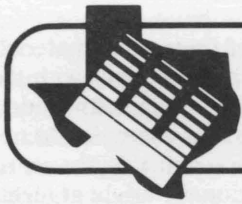


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## Texas Agricultural Extension Service

# Clothing For Fitness

## Running and Walking

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The growing interest in fitness and health has resulted in a dramatic rise in sports participation by females and in other fitness-related activities. Trends and statistics reveal that exercise-walking is among the highest ranked participation sports, with a quarter of Americans aged seven and over walking. For an aging United States, walking appeals to older exercisers far more than any other sport. More than half of the exercise-walkers are over 33 years old, whereas three quarters of all runners are under 33. Sixty-five percent of the exercise-walkers and 46 percent of the joggers are women. Thirty-nine percent of the women surveyed between the ages of 18-34 exercise every day, and 47 percent participate two to three times a week, according to one study.

Whether the sport is jogging or walking, and whether the participant is young or old, comfortable clothes and shoes are a must. The information that follows will guide men and women in the selection of apparel and shoes that are appropriate for running and walking.

### Dress Appropriately for the Weather

Dressing right when running or walking involves selecting clothing that provides protection against weather conditions. The fiber you choose depends on your own thermal needs, how heavily you perspire and what feels most comfortable against your skin. Most

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people consider cotton the most comfortable fiber to wear, especially on hot, humid days. The best way to dress for hot, humid weather, when a great deal of moisture may have to be absorbed, is to wear a fairly open synthetic fabric next to the skin covered by an absorbent fabric such as cotton. The cotton will then draw the moisture through the nonabsorbent synthetic and hold it away from the skin surface. Synthetic fibers transfer moisture without absorbing it to the outer surface of a fabric, where it is evaporated, leaving the wearer and the garment dry. The cotton outer layer insures that moisture is blotted and doesn't wick its way back to the skin surface. Cotton/polyester blends keep their shape when wet better than 100 percent cotton that may, with profuse perspiration, result in a heavy, soggy garment that sticks to the wearer at the end of the run. Wool also can absorb a great deal of moisture within its fibers but allows the wearer to feel dry as it holds moisture up off the skin surface, thus keeping the garment from clinging to the skin.

The use of polypropylene in active sportswear has gained widespread acceptance in recent years by manufacturers and retailers for its wicking ability. Polypropylene is most frequently used for linings of shorts and breathable warm-up jackets.

In warm weather, the basic attire for running consists of a pair of shorts and a T-shirt or a sleeveless top called a singlet. Running and walking attire should be as thin and open as possible to allow air to enter garments and carry off body heat and the moist vapor on the skin surface.

Light colors reflect the heat in warm weather. A low-cut neckline and wide armholes on a singlet top increase the flow of air through clothing and thus provide cooling. Shorts with thin, moisture-transporting inner briefs eliminate the need for separate underpants. Whether jogging or walking, dress comfortably. (Figure 1)

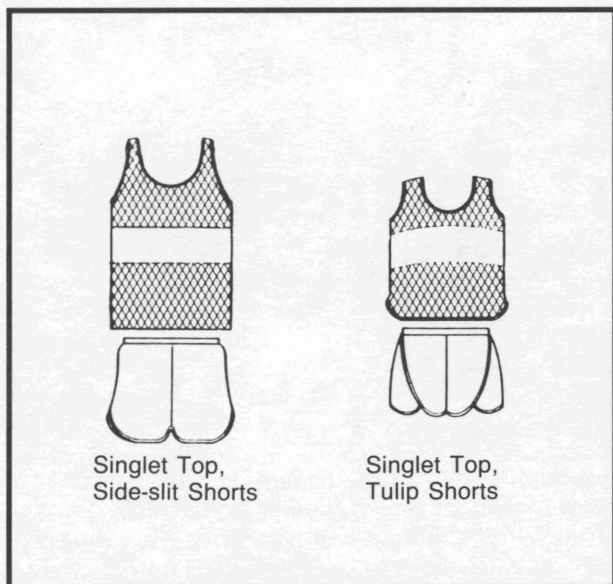


Fig. 1

In rainy weather, choose microporous fabrics that provide water resistance yet retain breathability. These fabrics are sold under such trade names as Gore-tex, Klimatex, Entrant, Imtrex, and Matrex. Many rain suits have mesh ventilation systems. Check to be certain that the seams are taped or sealed to avoid leakage through stitching holes. Hoods provide good head coverage. Look for features that allow you to vary the size of openings at the wrists, ankles, neck, and waist. Velcro,<sup>®</sup> snap, or drawstring closures let you open and close a rain suit to air flow when needed. Avoid cotton sweatsuits in the rain because they will absorb water, feel heavy and slow you down.

In chilly weather, several light layers are more effective than a bulky coat and heavy bottoms. Keep head and hands covered to avoid heat loss. When walking or running, wear thermal underwear under sweatpants, a sweatshirt or wool sweater topped off by a closely woven nylon windbreaker, and a knit cap in cold weather.

### Safety Precautions

Today's athletic clothes often have reflective trims or reflective fabrics added to accent the garments and provide safety through increased visibility. If the ac-

tivewear does not have reflective materials, reflective tapes are available in the sewing notions department of most fabric stores or through specialty catalogs and can be added by machine or by hand.

In daylight, garments made of fluorescent materials appear brightest and give off the most light with the stimulation of sunlight or ultraviolet light. Incandescent lights, from car headlights, for example, do not provide as great a stimulus when striking fluorescents, so these materials are not exceptionally bright at night.

For nighttime visibility, choose colors that provide the strongest contrast with the black background—white or silver. To be visible at night, clothing must incorporate special materials that are capable of capturing the light and directing its reflection back toward headlights and the driver behind them. Materials with this quality are called “retroreflective.” Some fabrics are both fluorescent and retroreflective. These fabrics provide high visibility under both daylight and nightlight conditions.

Both fluorescent and reflective materials are available in tapes and fabrics. To make clothes you already own more visible, sew or iron on a reflective fabric trim on the most highly mobile parts of the body—the arms and legs. The placement of trim in these areas may help increase visibility more than tape placed on a relatively stable body part. For a jogger who runs at night or at dusk, tape placed along the front or back of the arms and legs adds reflectivity at points most likely to be picked up by car headlights as well as creating the contrast of motion. When selecting clothing, consider when the clothing will be worn.

### Fit and Comfort

When choosing clothing for walking or running, choose styles that:

- fit closely but not tightly
- allow ventilation
- allow easy movement
- are comfortable against the skin
- provide for the dissipation of body moisture

Stretchy fabrics used in jogging shorts, tops, and suits solve many problems of fit. Features to look for include soft, easily stretchable elastic at the waistline, shorts with a drawstring and elastic at the waist, and shorts that overlap or split at the side or front of the leg that allow a full range of hip motion without binding. Running shorts should not cause underwear to shift uncomfortably during movement. Shorts with attached briefs may be preferable in this respect.

The fit of a singlet top is important because the arm motion used in running can shift a garment out of position or cause chafing of the arms, chest, and underarm area. The singlet straps need to be wide enough to cover the straps of a support bra that should be worn when running. The armhole should be cut high enough at the underarm to cover the bra. Many women's tops have bra strap guides.



Many sport bras, designed specifically for active women, are now on the market. Proper fit is necessary to reduce the discomfort many women experience during vigorous activity. If the bra fits properly, a woman should be able to drop the straps and not lose any upward support. Upward support should come from the cup and band structure, not from the straps.

Most support bras are made of some combination of cotton, polyester, nylon and spandex. A sport bra should prevent breast motion in all directions—up, down and side to side. Look for the following features when buying a sport bra:

- wide straps, a wide band under the bust
- wide panels under the arms and in the back closure band
- firm, mostly nonelastic materials
- minimum of fasteners that are flat, nonabrasive, easy to use, and cushioned from the skin
- thin, porous fabrics, open mesh panels under the arm or at the back, ventilating strips at the center front or around the cups for coolness
- seamless cups, a minimum of decorations and nonirritating edge finishes

Many actionwear tops have built-in bras. Breast support garments provide both support and fashion.

## Shoes and Socks

It is important to select well-fitting, supportive shoes to protect the feet against problems that could arise while running or walking. When trying on shoes, be sure to wear the kind of socks that you plan to wear when running or walking and try on both shoes. If you require any type of corrective device or shoe modification, select your shoes with allowance for this.

Running shoes are made for forward movement. Look for cushioned wedge-shaped soles, flared heels and lightweight uppers. Durable soles have front-end curves to protect toes, solid ridges to grasp the sur-

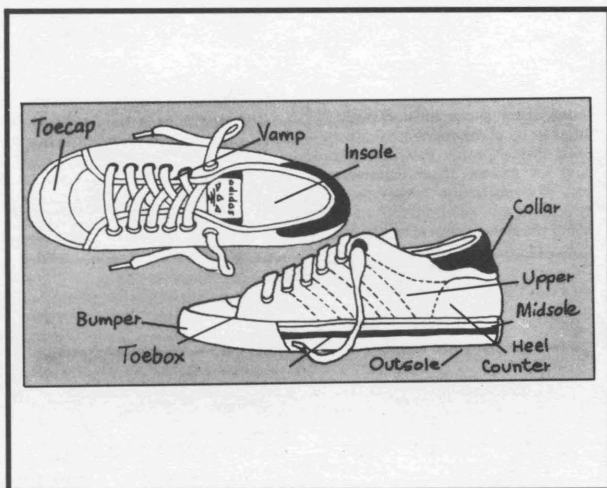


Fig. 2

face and elevated heels to protect the heel and absorb the shock. Waffle soles are good for traction on hills and dirt courses while crepe soles provide greater durability on cement.

**Heels** are flared at the base to give support and stability, cushioned to reduce shock and elevated to reduce strain on ankle, heel, and Achilles tendon. Look for adequate stiffness of the heel counter (stiffening material around the back of the shoe) to prevent excessive and unwanted motion of the heel within the shoe. (Figure 2)

The **uppers** should hold the foot in place and have adequate cushioning on the cuff around the ankle and at the Achilles tendon to reduce friction and irritation. Lightweight nylon can be laundered and prevents the "break-in blisters" often caused by leather or heavy cotton canvas.

Everyone's sock needs are different. When deciding which socks to buy, try on several styles, lengths, and fiber types, wear them and determine which one performs best for you. Socks provide protection from abrasion and friction as the feet move within the shoe and insulation for warmth on cold days.

Socks are made of cotton, acrylic, spandex, nylon, wool, silk, polypropylene and combinations of these fibers. **Cotton** blended with acrylic improves resiliency and absorbency. **Spandex** is always used with other fibers when elasticity and close fit are needed. **Nylon** is most often blended with other fibers and helps transport perspiration away from the foot to the outer surface of the sock. Nylon also adds strength to areas of heavy wear, such as the toe and heel. **Wool** is resilient and absorbs moisture but has low abrasion resistance and is usually blended with other fibers to improve fit, durability and launderability. **Silk** is often used in socks as a liner because its smoothness reduces friction between the foot, a second sock and the shoe, thus preventing blisters. **Polypropylene** has the ability to transport moisture away from the feet. It is being blended with wool or wool and nylon to produce a sock combining the properties of all three fibers. Socks containing polypropylene must be air dried rather than machine dried to avoid shrinkage and melting of the fiber.

Because such a variety of fibers is used in socks, always check the care label attached to the socks and follow the directions. Special treatments are used to inhibit the buildup of odor in socks, discourage the growth of bacteria and make them machine washable and dryable.

Running and walking are two of the best ways to improve physical fitness levels. Feeling comfortable while exercising can help motivate you to continue a routine exercise program that will help you look better and feel better about yourself. The key to feeling comfortable is selecting the right clothes for the weather and the right shoes for the activity. Dress for safety as well as comfort.

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics. Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department Of Agriculture. Zerle L. Carpenter, Director, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, The Texas A&M University System.

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