

Parenting the Preschooler

 **Working for Wisconsin Families**

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Dressing Your Preschooler For Winter

Winter brings many outdoor activities that your preschooler enjoys. But, to have a safe and enjoyable time outdoors, your child needs to be properly dressed. One Vilas County day care provider said, "A child will not admit to being cold just to be able to be outside." It's a parent's responsibility to provide winter clothing that is warm and comfortable for their children.

Northern Wisconsin winters are cold. Freezing temperatures and cold winds can cause parts of the body to freeze (frostbite) and can even cause death. Dressing properly can help your preschooler survive the cold.

There are three ways to stay warm when it is cold.

- ⇒ Cover all parts of your body.
- ⇒ Dress in layers.
- ⇒ Keep dry.

Other concerns include loose fitting clothing, safety, quality and self dress features.

Cover Yourself

In cold weather it is important to cover all parts of your preschooler's body. Proper clothing helps protect your child from very cold outdoor temperatures or from drafty indoor rooms.

Indoors, the child should:

- ⇒ Wear at least two or three thin layers of clothes on his body, arms, and legs. Several lightweight, loose layers of clothing will keep the child warmer than

one heavy layer. An undershirt helps hold in warmth.

- ⇒ Wear socks and shoes.

Outdoors, the child should:

- ⇒ Wear a hood, hat, scarf or face mask on the head. Over 50 percent of the body's heat loss is at the head. Cover your preschooler's head to keep warm.
- ⇒ Wear a scarf around the neck.
- ⇒ Wear a coat or snowsuit.
- ⇒ Put mittens or gloves on your child's hands. Wear two pairs when it is very cold.
- ⇒ Wear warm boots or waterproof boots over shoes.

Dress in Layers

Two or three layers of clothing give more warmth than just one thick garment. Air is trapped between the layers. This still air is a very good insulator.

Choose warm underclothes for your child's first layer. Choose thermal knit shirts and vests with long sleeves. Long underwear, thermal pants, or tights can go under jeans, pants, or trousers. If you don't have long underwear, have the child wear an extra pair of pants or pajamas. Be sure the fit is not too snug.

Choose warm daytime clothes. Daytime clothes are the second layer. They should have warm features such as:

- ⇒ High necklines or collars that button up.
- ⇒ Long sleeves - knit or button cuffs.
- ⇒ Fitted waistlines - belts, buttons, or elastic.

- ⇒ Long pants - slim, straight leg styles are warmer than wide ones. Pants are warmer than skirts. Get pants big enough to fit over long underwear.
- ⇒ Pullover, button, or zip up styles in sweaters.
- ⇒ Fabrics that are thick and fuzzy, i.e., denim, corduroy, knit or flannel, rather than slick and thin.
- ⇒ Add a shirt over a sweater or a sweater over a fiberfill vest.
- ⇒ Choose heavy socks and shoes with closed toes and heels.

Choose warm outerwear. Look for coats with:

- ⇒ Hoods to cover the head.
- ⇒ Thick, puffy fabric, such as quilted fiberfill.
- ⇒ Linings of fake fur or flannel.
- ⇒ Overlapping fabric with zippers or snaps to keep the wind out.
- ⇒ Enough length to cover the torso or seat, not just to the waist.
- ⇒ Rib-knit cuffs inside sleeves to keep out wind.
- ⇒ Elastic or drawstring at waist to keep coat close to body.

Keep Dry

Your child's body cools faster when wet. This is good in the summer, but not good in winter. There are generally two ways you can get wet, perspiration and the weather.

Wet clothes will not keep your child warm. Try to keep dry in cold weather.

In snow or rain:

- ⇒ Choose waterproof boots.
- ⇒ Choose outerwear that sheds moisture. Cotton or polyester poplin, or nylon fabrics shed water well.
- ⇒ Look for mittens that have a warm lining with a water repellent outer fabric of nylon or vinyl.

Although waterproof footwear is better, water repellent clothes are usually more comfortable than waterproof ones. Waterproof fabrics keep out all rain and snow but they may cause perspiration wetness, since they do not breathe or let air transfer among layers.

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Avoid Tight Clothing

Tight clothing, contrary to popular belief, does not keep you warmer. Tight clothing actually inhibits circulation so the body will not warm itself as efficiently. In addition, there is less chance for warm air to be trapped in the clothing for insulation.

Safety

Garments must fit closely to the body to be free of devices that catch on toys and furniture. Loose clothing, too long pants legs or sleeves, ties wrongly placed, overly large pockets and similar features may get caught in the wheels of wagons or tricycles, get stepped on when climbing, or catch on sticks and protruding objects, causing the child to fall or be thrown. Draw-strings at the neck or waist and long ties on hoods and caps are dangerous because children are apt to be caught by the strings as they play.

Bright colors are desirable for children's outer garments because they make it easier to spot the child on the playground, in the yard or on the street.

Quality

If a child often outgrows a garment before it wears out, you might think it would be sensible to buy cheap clothing that is not expected to last very long. For some clothing this is true. Some examples of costly expenditures are an expensive bathing suit or party outfit for a child that seldom goes to the beach or to parties. But remember children give clothing hard wear, so the clothing must be tough enough to take it. This is particularly true of outdoor clothing that is worn for many months in our cold climate. Also, choose clothing with fasteners or features that allow the child to dress without needing help from an adult.

For more information on Parenting and Child Development, contact:
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