A recent discussion about how to prevent cold feet, courtesy of the Bike Winter listserv

Keith wrote: My wife and I, along with a couple of close friends, took a 20 mile'ish ride today. The guys were fine but the ladies "complained" about their feet getting cold. It was only in the low 30's here so...this might be a long winter. How do the bike winter folks deal with the cold feet issues?

Bob Matter wrote: The key to warm feet is a good boot at least 1/2 size larger than your normal shoe size to accommodate thick wool socks (or multiple pairs of thinner wool socks) without being too tight. Tight shoes restrict blood flow and compress the fibers of your socks thus causing cold feet. Extra space allows for better circulation and air barriers. Air barriers trap and hold warm air. With your socks and boots on you should be able to wiggle your toes freely. I've had good luck with Rocky brand leather chukka boots w/ built-in Gore-Tex booties and Danner brand leather hiking boots also with built-in Gore-Tex booties. I like the built-in Gore-Tex booties because I can step through slush puddles off the bike and keep my feet dry. Rocky and Danner both make wide sizes which I also need and which are often hard to find in other boots.

Howard wrote: This is excellent. It captures the important concept of giving your toes room to wiggle very well. In my opinion, any solution that involves some variation of "stuffing" a thickly-socked foot into a boot is not viable. I don't know why some people report that that solution works fine for them...above-average circulation, maybe. Or short rides. Or maybe they don't go out on the really cold days. Or maybe I'm wrong.

Jane Healy wrote: You lose over 70% of your body heat through your head. If you are getting cold, the number one step is to get your head covered up! Also, wind will strip your body of its thin warmth envelope (this surrounds and protects you at all times). Layering goes a long way toward keeping comfortable since it creates pockets of warmth that can't be taken away easily by the wind. You can buy small chemical "hand warmers" at most hardware stores that you can stuff into the toes of your shoes to keep your feet warm. They are a one-time use item but they can last for a few hours. Personally, I swear by both Smartwool and fleece socks. Both keep warm when wet--something important when it's cold outside and you might be sweating at times. I wear these much of the winter with my Birkenstock clogs (large enough to accommodate the extra bulk). Finally, in a real pinch, you can put newspaper in your shoes and you can put plastic bags over your feet (inside your shoes). Both are remarkably effective in helping to keep your feet warm, and you can use this technique anywhere, for cheap. I always keep a couple of grocery bags tucked under my seat stays since they work for warmth and they are great for keeping your bike seat from getting wet when you have to park your bike in the rain.

Art Bikes wrote: The bags used to deliver newspapers are great to cover your feet with. And you can stuff your soaked shoes with the paper to speed up their drying.

Lauren Sailor wrote: I saw an applicable blog posted in the fixed gear forums. I found it fascinating and thought I'd pass it along.

http://lacemine29.blogspot.com/2007/11/warm-feet-are-happy-feet_17.html

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For more tips on how to make winter biking a no sweat experience, visit bikewinter.org. Be sure to participate in your area's events too!

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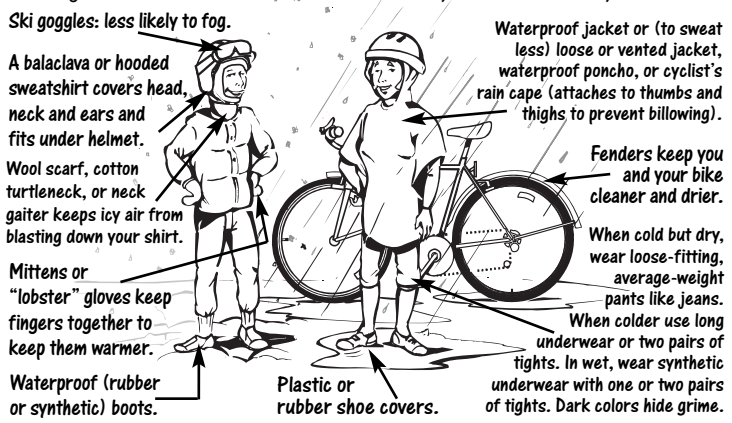
Dressing for Cold & Wet

From Mr Bike's *Urban Bikers' Tricks & Tips*, a 250-page paperback, at bookstores & mrbike.com

Start with a sweatshirt or jacket. When colder, add t-shirts, light sweaters, long underwear, and tights. Light layers let you remove outer clothes if you warm up. When very cold, many don't need much insulation on torsos and legs—but need more on ears, hands, and feet where blood flows less.



Dressing in layers for cold weather

BASE LAYER

Wear fabric that wicks moisture away like poly-propylene, polyester, nylon or silk—not cotton.

MIDDLE LAYER

Wear an insulating/wicking layer like wool or fleece that holds heat. Overlap clothes at the neck, wrist, waist and ankle to seal out wind.

OUTER LAYER

Use water-resistant and wind-resistant materials like nylon to keep you warm and dry in wet conditions.

Send text for future issues to TheDerailleur@gmail.com

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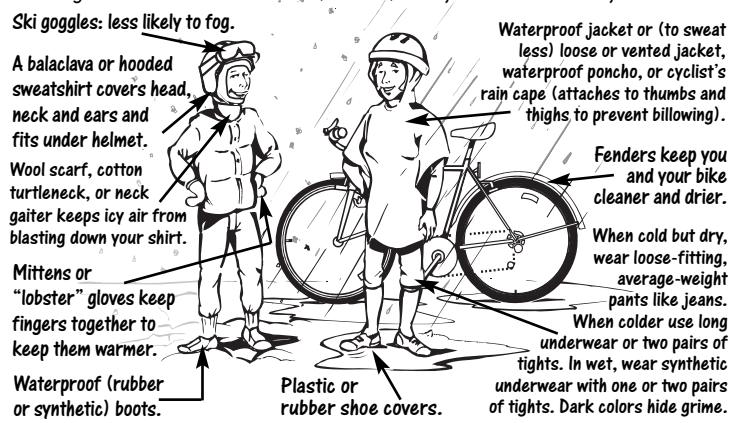

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