



Walking into a cryotherapy center for the first time can feel slightly surreal. The room is warm, the equipment looks clinical but polished, and then someone explains that you are about to spend a few minutes in temperatures that can plunge far below anything you would encounter outdoors. Most first-timers ask the same practical question before anything else: what exactly am I supposed to wear?

It is the right question. Cryotherapy is short, but preparation matters. What you wear affects comfort, safety, and whether the session feels manageable or unnecessarily stressful. Too much coverage can trap moisture or interfere with the treatment setup. Too little can expose sensitive skin that should be protected. The goal is not to bundle up like winter weather. It is to wear the right protective items, keep skin dry, and avoid anything that creates risk in an ultra-cold environment.

If you know what to expect before you arrive, the whole session tends to feel simpler. You check in, change if needed, protect the areas that matter most, and get through the treatment without fuss. That is usually the difference between someone stepping out saying, "That was easier than I thought," and someone who spends the first minute distracted by avoidable discomfort.

What cryotherapy actually feels like

Before talking about clothing, it helps to understand the type of cold involved. Whole-body cryotherapy sessions usually last around two to four minutes. Depending on the machine and the provider, the chamber may be electric or nitrogen-based, and the air temperature can fall somewhere in a very cold range, often well below minus 100 degrees Fahrenheit. The exact number tends to get attention, but the duration is so short that the practical experience is different from being outdoors in harsh winter conditions.

Most people describe the sensation less as deep freezing and more as an intense, dry cold that hits fast and then plateaus. Dry cold behaves differently than damp cold. It can feel sharp on exposed skin, especially at the fingers, toes, and thinner areas of the body, but it does not usually create that soaked-to-the-bone feeling associated with wet winter weather. Because sessions are brief, preparation is centered on protecting extremities and sensitive areas rather than layering up heavily.

cryotherapy sessions

Local cryotherapy is a bit different. That treatment targets one area, such as a knee, shoulder, lower back, or elbow. Clothing matters there too, but the concern is access and skin condition more than full-body coverage. If you are having one body part treated, you may simply need clothing that exposes the area easily without forcing you to undress awkwardly.

The basic rule: dry, minimal, protective

The simplest way to think about cryotherapy clothing is this: keep your skin dry, wear minimal clothing on the body, and protect the areas most vulnerable to cold. That combination is what most reputable centers are aiming for when they give pre-session instructions.

For a whole-body session, most facilities provide or require a few protective items. These often include thick dry socks, insulated gloves or mittens, and footwear such as clogs, slippers, or protective shoes. Men usually wear boxer briefs or shorts. Women often wear a sports bra and underwear or shorts. Some centers provide robes for before and after the session and ask clients to remove them right before entering the chamber.

That can sound sparse if you have never done cryotherapy before, but there is a reason for it. Bulky fabric is not automatically better. What matters is that the skin stays dry and that circulation is not restricted. Tight elastic bands, damp workout clothes, and sweaty socks can all make the cold feel much more aggressive.

What to wear to a whole-body cryotherapy session

If you are attending a standard whole-body cryotherapy appointment, think in terms of three layers of planning. First, wear easy clothes to the facility. Second, change into session-appropriate garments. Third, protect your hands, feet, and other sensitive areas exactly as the provider instructs.

For the trip there, comfortable clothing is ideal. Joggers, loose athletic pants, a T-shirt, a zip hoodie, and slip-on shoes all make life easier. You do not need to dress for the session from home unless the center specifically allows that and your clothing is completely dry. Most people find it easier to arrive in normal clothes and change on site.

For the session itself, the standard setup is usually fairly minimal. Men often wear dry boxer briefs. Women often wear a dry sports bra and underwear, or a two-piece athletic set without metal details. Thick socks are important because toes are one of the first places people notice the cold. Gloves matter for the same reason. Some centers also recommend ear protection, a headband, or a face covering depending on the machine style and your tolerance.

A lot of first-time clients assume that leggings, long sleeves, or a sweatshirt will help. Often they do not. In many cases, centers discourage them because fabric can hold moisture, brush exposed skin in a way that feels unpleasant in the cold, or simply violate the provider's safety protocol. Follow the facility's rules rather than improvising.

What not to wear

Some clothing and accessories create more problems than people expect. Moisture is the biggest issue. If you arrive straight from a workout and your clothes are damp, that needs to be addressed before treatment. Even slightly sweaty fabric can make the session markedly less comfortable. Jewelry can also be a concern, especially metal pieces that sit directly against the skin.

Here are the items most commonly worth avoiding:

- Damp clothes of any kind
- Tight garments that restrict circulation
- Metal jewelry, watches, or body accessories
- Lotions, oils, or wet skincare products on treatment areas
- Freshly shaved, irritated, or broken skin left unreported

That last point deserves attention. If your skin is irritated, nicked, sunburned, or otherwise compromised, tell the staff. Most providers would much rather adjust the plan than have you tough it out and end up with an unpleasant reaction.

Why dry skin matters more than people realize

Dryness is not just a comfort issue. It is one of the most important preparation factors in cryotherapy. Water conducts temperature differently than dry air, and moisture on the skin or in clothing can intensify the cold where it sits. A few drops left after a shower, sweat under a sports bra, or damp hair at the neckline can all become the spot you fixate on once the session starts.

This is why many centers advise clients not to come in right after a sauna, steam room, shower, pool session, or hard workout unless they have enough time to cool down and dry off completely. The advice can feel fussy until you see the difference. Clients who show up cool and dry usually settle in quickly. Clients who rush in sweaty often spend the whole session shifting, tensing, and counting every second.

If you use body lotion heavily, especially on areas exposed during treatment, it is worth skipping it until afterward unless the center says otherwise. Oils and creams can leave a film that is not ideal in an ultra-cold chamber. The same goes for damp hair products that collect around the neck or hairline.

What to wear for local cryotherapy instead

Local cryotherapy is more forgiving from a wardrobe standpoint, but preparation still matters. If you are treating a shoulder, wear a tank top or loose shirt that can be moved easily. For a knee, shorts are far better than skinny jeans. For the lower back, athletic wear with easy access works well. The less you have to tug, peel, or rearrange, the smoother the appointment goes.

The best clothing for local treatment is simple, dry, and practical. You want the provider to access the target area without exposing more of the body than necessary. If you are treating a smaller area like the wrist or elbow, normal clothes may be fine as long as sleeves can roll up comfortably.

One detail many people overlook is post-treatment dressing. If an area feels cold or slightly numb immediately afterward, very tight clothing can feel irritating. A loose sleeve over a treated elbow is usually more comfortable than wrestling a compression layer back into place in the hallway.

How to prepare in the hours before your session

Most cryotherapy sessions go well when people keep the lead-up boring. No drama, no rushing, no guessing. Eat normally, hydrate reasonably, stay dry, and leave enough time to arrive calm. You do not need a special ritual, but a little preparation removes the most common friction points.

A practical pre-session routine looks like this:

- Eat a light meal or snack beforehand rather than arriving hungry
- Drink water, but do not force excessive amounts right before the appointment
- Avoid arriving sweaty from a workout unless you can fully cool down and dry off
- Bring easy-to-change clothing and remove jewelry before the session
- Tell the staff about any medical conditions, skin irritation, or anxiety about the cold

People sometimes assume cryotherapy should be done fasted because it is a wellness treatment. That is usually unnecessary and, for some clients, counterproductive. Going in shaky, hungry, or dehydrated tends to make you feel more uncomfortable, not more virtuous. A normal meal a couple of hours before, or a small snack if needed, is usually a better call.

The question of bras, underwear, and coverage

This is the part many people want clarified but hesitate to ask. For whole-body cryotherapy, less clothing is often standard, but the setup should still feel professional and appropriately private. Women commonly wear a sports bra and underwear. Men commonly wear boxer briefs or shorts. The exact requirements vary by facility, machine design, and gender-specific protocol.

Comfort matters here. If you own a sports bra with metal underwires, clasps, or hardware, choose something simpler. Soft athletic fabrics with minimal seams tend to feel best. For underwear, dry and breathable beats stylish. This is not the moment for lace, shaping garments, or anything tight enough to leave marks.

If modesty is a significant concern, call the facility beforehand and ask what they provide and what is required. Good centers answer this question routinely and without awkwardness. They may offer private changing areas, robes, and clear instructions. That conversation can remove a lot of anxiety before you even arrive.

Socks, gloves, and the importance of extremities

If there is one category of gear worth taking seriously, it is protection for hands and feet. Most people who struggle during cryotherapy do not struggle because their torso gets too cold. They struggle because their fingers and toes become the focus. Extremities lose comfort quickly, and once your mind locks onto cold feet, a two- or three-minute session can feel longer than it is.

Thick dry socks are essential. Some facilities provide them, but not all. If you bring your own, make them clean, dry, and warmer than your usual no-show athletic pair. Gloves or mittens should be dry as well. Centers often provide purpose-built hand protection because ordinary thin knit gloves may not be enough. If the facility also asks you to wear slippers, clogs, or protective footwear, do not treat that as optional. The floor setup and chamber type influence how much coverage is needed.

People with a history of cold sensitivity in the hands and feet should mention it. That does not automatically mean cryotherapy is off the table, but it does mean the staff should know before starting.

Hair, makeup, and skincare

Hair does not usually need much planning, but it should be dry. If you have long hair, tying it up can help keep it off the neck and shoulders. Damp strands against the skin are a common annoyance. If your center suggests ear protection or a headband, that is worth following, especially if your ears tend to be sensitive in cold weather.

Makeup is usually not a major issue unless it is heavy, greasy, or paired with occlusive skincare products. The larger concern is lotions, oils, balms, and recent topical treatments. If you have just applied a thick layer of body oil or a medicated cream to the area being treated, ask whether it should be removed first.

Fresh exfoliation, waxing, shaving irritation, or sunburn should not be brushed aside. In everyday life, mild irritation can seem trivial. In an ultra-cold setting, it can suddenly become the one patch of skin you regret ignoring.

What first-timers often get wrong

The most common mistake is overthinking the cold and underthinking the logistics. People worry about whether they can handle two or three minutes of low temperature, yet they show up in sweaty leggings, layered jewelry, and a sports bra they can barely peel off in a changing room. That is the sort of thing that makes the appointment frustrating.

Another common mistake is trying to look put together instead of dressing for function. Cryotherapy is not the appointment for complicated clothing. Choose garments that come on and off easily. If you need both hands, three contortions, and a private pep talk to remove your outfit, you picked the wrong one for the day.

Then there is the issue of bravado. Some clients assume more exposure means a better treatment, or that they should hide discomfort because the session is short. Neither idea is helpful. The provider needs accurate feedback. If your gloves are damp, if your socks are too thin, or if one area feels wrong rather than merely cold, say so.

After the session, what should you wear?

Most people feel invigorated after whole-body cryotherapy, but the immediate aftermath varies. Some step out energized and flushed. Others feel neutral for a few minutes and then notice a lift. Either way, having warm, comfortable clothes ready makes the transition smoother.

A robe is often provided briefly after the session, but for heading out, normal comfortable clothing is best. Soft joggers, a sweatshirt, and dry shoes work well. You usually do not need to bundle excessively unless it is cold outside and you are lingering outdoors. The body tends to rewarm quickly after such a short exposure, especially once you move around.

If you are pairing cryotherapy with another service, such as compression, stretching, or light recovery work, wear clothing that accommodates that plan. This is one reason athletic casual clothing works better than office attire for many appointments. It gives you flexibility.

A few special cases worth mentioning

Pregnancy, certain cardiovascular conditions, severe cold intolerance, and some nerve or circulation issues can change whether cryotherapy is appropriate at all. That is beyond wardrobe advice, but it belongs in the preparation conversation. Clothing cannot solve for a contraindication. When in doubt, get clearance from a qualified clinician and disclose relevant history to the provider.

There are also practical edge cases. If you have very sensitive skin, eczema flare-ups, Raynaud's symptoms, or healing tattoos, ask direct questions before booking. If you have recently had a spray tan, peel, or body treatment, clarify whether timing matters. Experienced centers are used to these questions, and serious providers will answer them specifically rather than brushing them off.

Age, body size, and cold tolerance also shape the experience. A person who loves winter swims and a person who sleeps in fleece socks year-round may both do fine, but their preparation mindset will be different. Neither wins a prize for pretending otherwise. The best results usually come from respecting your own baseline and preparing accordingly.

The simplest way to get it right

If you want one practical standard to follow, it is this: arrive in comfortable clothes, bring or wear dry undergarments appropriate for the session, expect to protect your hands and feet carefully, and communicate openly with the staff. That covers most of what matters.

Cryotherapy is not complicated once you strip away the mystique. The cold is intense but brief. The wardrobe is minimal but purposeful. The preparation is less about toughness and more about details, dryness, fit, access, circulation, and common sense. When those details are handled well, the session tends to feel controlled and straightforward.

For first-timers, that is usually the biggest surprise. The experience is not about enduring misery for wellness points. It is about showing up prepared, wearing the right protective items, and letting a short, professionally managed treatment do what it is designed to do. If your socks are dry, your jewelry is off, your skin is calm, and your clothing choices make changing easy, you are already most of the way there.

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FAQ About Cryotherapy

What does cryotherapy do for your body?

Cryotherapy exposes the body to extremely cold temperatures for a few minutes to trigger natural healing and recovery responses.

What are the negatives of cryotherapy?

The primary negatives of cryotherapy include skin burns, frostbite, temporary nerve irritation, and temporary spikes in blood pressure caused by extreme cold.

How much does cryotherapy typically cost?

A single session of non-medical cryotherapy typically costs between \$40 and \$100. However, prices vary significantly depending on the specific type of treatment, your location, and whether you purchase a membership or package.