

## Why purchase a Triathlon/Swimming Wetsuit?

Regardless of whether you are a seasoned competitor or new to triathlon, a triathlon wetsuit will be one of the most useful pieces of gear you can purchase.

A triathlon wetsuit is designed for swimming. The flexibility around the arms should not impede your swimming. Your triathlon wetsuit should fit you just like a second skin.

Compare different types and brands of wetsuits until you find one that feels right for your body shape. In general, the more expensive the suit the more flexibility it will have and the better it should fit.

## Benefits

1. **Increase your speed** -
  - a. **Buoyancy** - The neoprene that wetsuits are made of is extremely buoyant in water. The more you float in the water, the easier it is for you to move forward and therefore swim quicker. Almost all triathlon wetsuit brands achieve their buoyancy from a combination of thickness and type of rubber. Most brands will have the thickest part of their wetsuits no more than 5mm.
  - b. **Reduce Drag** - Wetsuits are designed to reduce drag in the water helping you to swim faster.
2. **Keep you warm** - A wetsuit is a snug fitting neoprene rubber suit designed to insulate you in cold waters. Wetsuit material is a closed-cell product, it is completely waterproof.

## Why don't other types of wetsuits work for swimming?

It is important to use a triathlon-specific suit rather than a diving/surfing/kayaking suit because these types of suits are often made of neoprene or other materials that are less flexible and are not designed to accommodate the motions of swimming, most importantly in the shoulder area.

1. Restriction – Tri wetsuits are designed for arm mobility you need for swimming
2. Water Exchange – Don't have special neck or armhole seals
3. Wrong type of seams – Less expensive wetsuits use seams that chafe, leak and add drag
4. Wrong Materials – Don't use special neoprene

### **Full Suit or Sleeveless?**

This can be a personal preference.

Many people think that the sleeved suits are going to be too constricting in the shoulders therefore making you swim slower. This is absolutely not the case!

### ***Sleeveless or Long John***

- Will be easier to get on and off
- Have no fit issues with the arms
- Just as buoyant as a fullsuit
- Have a easier arm rotation
- Less rubber to deal with
- Easier to get use to when new to wetsuits.
- Maintain a feel for the water by keeping the arms free.
- Also, you may prefer a sleeveless when swimming in warm water. Keep an eye on where the seams are though, as the trim of the sleeveless can cause chafing in the armpits or on your chest.

### ***Full Wetsuit –***

- Will keep you warmer in really cold water and can help you swim faster.
- Sleeves reduce drag, help you float, and that adds up to more potential speed.

### **Fitting Wetsuit?**

Novice's initial reaction when putting their wetsuit on is that it is too tight on the chest. Any tightness will immediately disappear as soon as you enter the water.

Practicing in a wetsuit in the weeks prior to the race is very important and will dispel any fears you may have. Hiring a wetsuit in advance of the event will allow you time to practice in it.

The suit must be comfortable from crotch to shoulder; it must not limit your mobility or shoulder/arm reach.

The wetsuit that is right for you won't feel like comfortable pajamas. It can feel a little tight and very hot out of the water. Wetsuits expand when they get wet. The suit will not feel so tight when you get it in the water. One way of describing the perfect suit fit is that the suit should feel like a surgeon's glove -- not constricting but like a second skin.

Triathlon swim suits work by allowing a thin layer of water in, but they should not be loose enough to allow an in and out flow of water

Not all wetsuit makers use the same body proportions so do not rely on the fact that two different makes describe a size as Medium - they may be wildly different in fit. Do get advice on the fit of the suit and do be prepared to try on several, and allow time for this.

Arm and leg lengths will vary and it is ok if they are shorter. In fact a shorter leg will allow for quicker removal of the suit.

Most wetsuits will vary in thickness (2mm-5mm) and "stretchability" throughout. You'll want thinner and generally more flexible material around your shoulder and arms where you will be moving most. You'll want thicker material in the chest and leg areas to help with float. The various brands will for the most part offer the same type of rubber/neoprene for the price ranges.

### **How to put on a wetsuit?**

Start with your **LEGS**

- Wear a sock or plastic bags to help the suit slide over your feet
- Grasp suit from the inside.
- Slide your legs through the suit
- Carefully tug the leg up avoiding fingernail damage.
- Be sure there are no wrinkles behind your knee.
- Continue to work the suit up your legs.
- Be sure the crotch is pulled all the way up

Begin to tug your **TORSO** up.

- Make sure the butt of the suit is pulled up too.
- Continue working the entire torso up your body.

Putting your **SLEEVES** on

- Start to pull your sleeves up.
- Continue getting those sleeves pulled up!
- Be sure the arm is not twisted.
- Get those shoulders pulled up nice and snug.
- Watch that underarm
- Double check the underarm for gaps.
- Re-adjust the torso pulling up to the neck.

- Pull that neck up for a good seal.

### **ZIPPING Up**

- Have someone assist you to zip up
- Final check of your underarms: NO GAPS!

Note: Attempting to put on your wetsuit when wet or sweaty can be very difficult

### **High Speed Removal of Wetsuit?**

1. While you're running out of the water into T1, grab the zipper leash and pull down pull it down to your waist.
2. Triathlon specific wetsuits are made to be removed quickly, so once at your bike, pull the wetsuit down around your ankles and step out of it as best you can.
3. Stepping out can be done by stepping on the left leg of the suit with your right foot and pulling your left leg up and out. Step on the right leg of the suit with your free left foot and pull up with your right foot.
4. For the more experienced this can be done whilst fitting your bike helmet

Note: Wetsuits are not invincible. When taking your wetsuit on and off, be careful not to stress the wetsuit seams.

### **Care of Wetsuit?**

1. **Rinse** - After your race, rinse your wetsuit, inside and out, and let it dry (inside out) overnight in your shower. You also should wash your suit occasionally using wetsuit shampoo or baby shampoo.
2. **Hang to dry** - Use a special wetsuit hanger if you have one; if not, use a plastic hanger. Never use a thin wire hanger. The metal will cause the neoprene to degrade. Let the wetsuit dry thoroughly before storing it to keep it looking and smelling good.
3. **Travelling** - When you pack your suit in a race bag, carry it inside out (nylon side out) to avoid chipping the smooth neoprene skin. Pack loosely and be sure it is dry
4. **Storage** - Store the suit flat or hang and, if you have to fold, do it lightly as though you were folding a good suit to pack in a case
5. **Lubrication** - If you need lubrication use a water-soluble natural substance. E.g. Body Glide or Suit Juice. NO VASELINE!!
6. **Inspect for Damage** - Before you store your wetsuit, check for any rips or tears. It's easy to get them fixed when they are small.
7. **Identification** - Write your name in your wetsuit, perhaps on the inside, on the fabric, with a permanent magic marker. You'll want to identify your wetsuit