

A ‘cool’ product guide



The tools and products you need to stay active

by Vicky Uhland

The body has numerous points that act as heat conductors, so it doesn't matter which one you choose to cool, as long as it works for you, says Teresa Frohman, PA-C, a clinical specialist at the Multiple Sclerosis Clinic at the University of Texas Southwestern.

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Sweltering temperatures can make MS symptoms worse. Give them the cold shoulder with these [sizzling ideas](#).

Hands and feet

Try a high-tech cooling wrist or ankle wrap, or pre-moistened towels with built-in coolants, like [Chill Towel](#), suggests Ashley Uyeshiro, OTD, OTR/L, assistant professor of clinical occupational therapy at the University of Southern California.

Head and neck

Numerous cooling neck wraps and scarves are available. Uyeshiro is a fan of [Frogg Toggs' Chilly Pad](#), which reaches an average of 20 degrees below the ambient temperature when wet. She and her clients also make their own cooling neck scarves and bandanas by placing crystal soil water beads used for gardening into scraps of fabric and sewing them up. The gardening beads are similar to the materials used in some commercially manufactured cooling scarves, and become soft and absorbent when they're wet. Refrigerating the scarf

makes them chilly.

For the head, “hats can have huge benefits,” says Uyeshiro, who recommends breathable straw hats with 360-degree brims to shade both noggin and neck. If that’s not your style, [Polar Products](#) makes [baseball](#) and [bucket hats](#) with inserts that contain water-absorbing crystals. Wet the fabric-covered insert, place it in a refrigerator or freezer, and then put it in the crown of the hat for up to two hours of heat relief. Too messy? Frogg Toggs makes a stylish [Chilly Bean Cool Hat](#) of breathable mesh and built-in Chilly Pad coolant.



A UV-protective umbrella offers skin protection and keeps the temperature lower. Photo by Chip Simons.

A UV-protective umbrella, like the [SunBLOK](#) manufactured by GustBuster, can help you keep a cool head. This umbrella blocks 96 percent of UVA and UVB rays, and the temperature is up to 10 degrees cooler under the umbrella than outside of it, according to the company’s tests.

If you’re at home, an option is to lay your head on a pillow that has a refrigerated or frozen cooling pack tucked underneath it, inside the pillowcase. Some people also like the refreshing feeling of using a personal mister, like the ones made by [Misty Mate](#).

Core

For women, Polar Products and [TaTa Coolerz](#) make cooling inserts that can be placed inside a bra. These small fabric packs contain gel or crystals that can be refrigerated or frozen, and provide about an hour of heat relief. Another product, [Hot Girls Pearls](#), consists of gel-filled “pearls” that can be frozen and worn as a necklace or bracelet.

Dave Bexfield, an Albuquerque writer who was diagnosed with MS in 2006 and is founder of the nonprofit website [ActiveMSers.org](#), likes [Cold Front](#) packs for quick heat relief. These palm-sized packs come with their own insulated sunglass-sized case that contains a frozen cooling core. Tuck a pack wherever you need cooling—it lasts for about 10 minutes

before it needs to be put back in the case for a 20-minute recharging.



Dave Bexfield, an avid hiker, wears a cooling vest to enjoy summer activities. Photo by Chip Simons.

Vests may be the most well-known cooling product. Bambi Lint, diagnosed with MS in 2001, admits that she's "too vain to wear a cooling vest. Sometimes I don't want to look like I have MS." She's not alone. While there's no question that vests can be bulky, unattractive and expensive they also are effective coolers, says Uyeshiro.

One compromise is a vest that can be worn under clothing. [Glacier Tek](#), [Steele](#), Polar Products and [StaCool](#) make cooling vests that wrap around your waist or torso, next to your skin or over a thin layer of clothing. Cooling inserts for the vests are refrigerated or frozen and provide as much as three hours of cooling.

Bexfield has self-tested nearly a dozen vests and says they should fit snugly to get the maximum cooling effect—otherwise you're chilling the air and not your body. He also recommends freezing the gel or ice pack inserts that come with the vests in a mixture of ice, water and a teaspoon of salt. "The slurry will supercool those packs faster than even your freezer," he says.

For other clothing, breathability is key. Workout gear has this down to a science, but physical and occupational therapists have mixed feelings about the form-fitting, wicking fabrics made by sporting goods companies. The tightness could help with balance, but could also make you feel hotter. Uyeshiro suggests experimenting with larger sizes to see if they seem more

breathable.

Products to help you stay cool



Cold Front cooling inserts



Misty Mate cool towels



Polar Products neck wrap



Polar Products cooling
hat



StaCool vests

For more information on cooling products and how to finance them, contact an MS Navigator at 1-800-344-4867.

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