

## CLOTHING TIPS

Everybody feels better when his or her outfit is comfortable, smart and easy fitting. The clothing tips in this article offer a few ideas on how to use or adapt best your existing clothes, but they give you also some advice as to the purchasing of new clothes.

### General considerations

Most people with ALS pass their time in a sitting position. Therefore better choose a clothing style that takes this into account.

- Avoid to sit on upright seams, crumpling garments or tight waistbands.
- Getting in or out of your clothes should be easy as these actions can be very fatiguing.
- Light and comfortable clothing is preferred to a heavy or tight garment as it will not impede your movements so quickly.
- Changing the closure can make it easier to get dressed or undressed. When purchasing new clothes you should always check the type of closure or better still choose clothing without closure.
- Many people with ALS feel the cold sharply (especially in their hands and feet), while others may suddenly have an unbearable sensation of heat.

### Warmth

- Sitting in a padded bag -at home- is more pleasant than sitting under a blanket, which has a tendency to slip away and often doesn't protect the back of your legs.
- The best type of isolation is achieved through the presence of air between different layers of loose and light clothing.
- Although only your hands and feet will feel the cold, it's still important to keep the whole body isolated and warm.
- You should be feeling warm right from the beginning: if possible, warm your clothes before putting them on and see to it your bedroom has been warmed up before you get dressed.
- The choice of the fabric: padded material, wool or acryl, will catch the air and prevent compression.

### For people sensitive to sudden heat

- Choose loose garments, with an open neck. Easily removable knitted jackets or cardigans can be worn on top of a cotton shirt or blouse.
- Always wear a cotton nightie in bed.
- The choice of the fabric: pure cotton or mixes of cotton (higher part) and artificial fibers (lower part). Absorb-

ing fibers, such as cotton, viscose or modal, are to be preferred when sweating is an issue. Avoid nylon and polyester if possible.

### Open air

When the weather is cold, the wind will enhance the sensation of cold.

- You should be feeling warm right from the start.
- Cover your body as much as possible -don't forget your head! If a hat is not acceptable, you can wrap a thick scarf around your ears.
- Better wear different layers of light but warm clothing.
- On top you should wear something that is resistant to wind and (preferably) rain.
- Padded wind-jackets or anoraks are comfortable but if the zip is difficult to handle you better go for a closure with buttons or some kind of rope. Velcro is also an option.
- Ski departments in supermarkets or sporting goods stores have trousers and jackets that are lightweight and very warm.
- Thermal underwear can also be purchased from a mail order company.
- In cold weather wheelchair users will benefit from special waterproof capes and sitting bags.
- Woolen leggings, leg warmers or knee stockings are both attractive and practical.
- Mittens made of sheepskin or padded (with fur) keep your hands warm.

In sunny weather you should consider a sun hat as sunburns or sunstrokes can be very unpleasant.

### Blouses

Blouses worn on skirts or trousers shouldn't be too long. Large cutouts for neck or arms and comfortable sleeves make it easy to get dressed. When you are sitting your head and shoulders are the first thing people see and that's why an attractive neckline or a nice scarf or necklace are of great value to your clothing.

It's rather difficult to put on a traditional man's shirt and fasten its buttons. Knitted casual wear can be stretched easily and may even go with a tie.

### Skirts and dresses

If you want to look real good when sitting, you should wear a skirt that covers your knees sufficiently. Dresses and skirts with elastic waists are easy to put on and are quite flexible.



Very wide skirts may cause problems with wheelchairs as they can get entangled into the wheels.

When a skirt's closure is too difficult, you can always resort to Velcro.

Smart evening dresses made of lightweight fabrics are comfortable and are easy to remove when you have to go to the bathroom. Both straight and tight evening dresses are more difficult to handle.

In the bathroom you can put your skirt in a belt or girdle - you may even use your teeth! Wearing an overlap dress with the overlap at the back may prove useful as it can be opened without difficulty.

Wheelchair users may prefer an overlap on the front side or a garment that is fully buttoned, as this dress can be removed and left on the wheelchair when they are using the toilet.

## Trousers

A zip is easier to open and close when you pull a chain through its eye.

It's quite difficult to put on trousers with narrow legs. That's why you should choose trousers that have rather



long legs: indeed, when you are sitting the fabric will always ride up a little.

Many people find a tracksuit comfortable and practical, but be careful with the padding: it shouldn't be too fluffy because it will stick when you get undressed.

Trousers having a full or a partial elastic waistband are the most easy to handle. Adapted styles with flat folds in the waistband are easier to remove than those that are too tight.

In order to put on or off your trousers more easily you just sew a 30 cm zip in each lateral seam of the waistband. This way the lateral seams can be opened and the underwear can be attached to the waistband with a piece of Velcro. This makes it possible to lower the complete back of your trousers when using the toilet. This means also that the underwear has to be adapted.

7/8 stretching trousers are safer than the full length, especially when you are going up or down stairs.

A fully buttoned nightshirt is easy to put on and is an excellent alternative for pyjamas.

When you find it hard in bed to turn on your other side, you may prefer a nightie made of some smooth and shiny material, such as satin, polyester or nylon. Some people prefer to sleep naked.

## Underwear

Underwear made of synthetic fibres can produce a lot of static electricity; cotton underwear doesn't have this effect and is much cooler in hot weather.

Underpants are available in different styles. Widely cut out pants come without elastics. Pants with long legs tend to be warmer. Panties can be dropped more easily. Both boxer shorts and panties can be handled more easily and more quickly than y-shaped men's underwear. When the legs are wide enough, the crotch can be shoved to one side when you want to pee.



Wide women's panties

Panties

Boxer short

## Eating

If your clothes need to be extra protected while you are eating something, then try to put a very large napkin into your collar or tie it around your neck. This napkin may be worn above an apron. A tabard with watertight seams and special aprons with clips are available at specialized suppliers.

## Footwear

Moccasins are easy to put on. Elastic laces make it possible to put on your shoes without loosening the laces. Shoes and slippers with Velcro closure can be found in a variety of shops. Slippers with socks are warm when you never walk.

Wide shoes having a large opening are also very easy to put on.

Of course, the most important thing is the safety of the closures. Furthermore both the shoes and the slippers should give enough support and should never come off while you are walking in them.

## Closures

Velcro can be used as a substitute for all kinds of closures. It consists of two strips: one with hooks and the other with loops. You close this Velcro closure simply by pushing both strips against each other and you open it by pulling them apart. The side composed of hooks is applied away from the skin as it is rougher than the side with the loops. In general Velcro, when applied in little pieces rather than in one long strip, will be easier to handle and it will look nicer as well. Velcro is available in different colors and widths. It is important to fasten the

# TIPS

Velcro closure when the garment is washed: if not, the Velcro hooks will get full of fluffs.

To replace buttons you act as follows. First you place the hooks at the side where the buttons are. Then you sew up the buttonhole and put on top of it a piece of Velcro with loops. Finally the button is sewn on top of the buttonhole to restore the normal view.

Sometimes it will be sufficient to replace the existing buttons or hooks by a larger size.

On a coat hooks and rope closures are both ornamental and functional and they are very useful in outerwear.

Sets of snap fasteners are available when you want to put buttons on your clothes neatly. These are easy to open but when you want to close them a certain amount of ability is required to put both halves in place accurately.

Translation: **André De Laet**  
Source: **[www.mndassociation.org](http://www.mndassociation.org)**