

## **General Wetsuit Advice**

### **Insulation**

Generally the thicker the neoprene the warmer the suit. Maximum permitted thickness of neoprene is 5mm. The type of neoprene can also have an effect. For example some suits are now made with integrated air pockets that improve both the buoyancy, warmth and reduce weight for the same thickness of material. Some water will also leak into the suit from the zip therefore the longer the zip the cooler the suit but this won't make a huge difference. Suits are designed to allow a thin layer of water to sit between the suit and your body so fit is important. If the suit is too big water may pool or flow through the suit this will have a cooling effect.

### **Buoyancy**

For heavily muscled or novice athletes the buoyancy of the wetsuit is important. Thicker panels on your abdomen and legs can help to lift you higher in the water. Integrated air pockets in these regions can also make a difference. Faster and/or more buoyant athletes may not require this extra buoyancy and may even find it a disadvantage if they sit too high and cannot keep their kick under the water.

### **Flexibility**

Freedom of movement is the key, particularly around your shoulders and arms. Some suits use more flexible and thinner materials around these areas to reduce the pressure as you swim. The quality of the materials and liners will effect how much give the suit has. The neoprene quality may be good but if the liner is cheap or has been attached in the wrong direction the give in the suit will be limited. If the body is too short or too tight this will make the situation worse so fit becomes key.

### **Resistance**

The surface of some suits are coated with a material that reduces drag. There are different variations of coating that make you more slippery and able to get the most out of every stroke.

### **Weight**

Not a major factor but as with most things related to sport lighter is better. Again the air pocket technologies can help here as sections of the material are cut away making the suit lighter. The biggest weight factor will be if water pools in badly fitting areas of the suit and you have to 'carry it' around the swim course with you. This will also increase your frontal surface area making you cut a bigger hole.

### **Budget**

It usually comes down to money. We all have a budget and need to find the best possible option in that range. The only area where no compromises should be made is fit. If the suit doesn't fit don't buy it..... and the best way to find out is to swim in it.

### **Quality**

This will effect how long the suit lasts:

- Are the seams stitched and glued?
- Is the neoprene and liner durable as well as flexible?

### **What makes a good fit?**

If wearing one for the first time it can feel slightly claustrophobic, don't panic! A triathlon wetsuit is designed to fit like a second skin. It should feel very snug when put on. When you begin your swim the wetsuit will fill with some water, which will expand the suit and slightly lift it away from your body. The water between the suit and your body will quickly warm to a comfortable temperature.

The neck line should be flush to your skin to avoid excess water getting into the suit, but should not rub or feel restrictive. Low neck lines are now becoming popular as they feel more natural. The only way to find out if the neck line will rub is to swim in it because your head position whilst swimming is a factor.

When on, try to pull the suit away from your skin, ideally it should act like a vacuum and suck the suit to you. If there are obvious folds or creases in the material these is where water may pool once you are swimming.

Flexible materials in the arms are popular as they provide more comfort and a better feel for the water but the down side is that they may stretch to allow water to flow in whilst swimming. Wrist seals are designed to stop this.

If the suit is too tight on your torso you may struggle to fully inflate your lungs and feel short of breath. If it is too loose water will pool or flow through the suit. If the arms and legs are too tight removing the suit may be a challenge and you may get cold or numb hands and feet. Again too loose and water will pool or flow through the suit.

If the torso length of the suit is too short this will increase the pressure on your shoulders and arms. The suit may pull away from your lower back and feel like it is pulling you backwards.

Ideally the arm and leg length should match you exactly but if not and the seams have covers on then there is the option to cut them either to remove excess length or to make the suit easier to remove. However remember that the limbs are tapered so cutting them too much because of excess length may leave them baggy and let in water. Also once you've cut them you can't return the suit.

## **Care Instructions**

Check any instructions that come with your wetsuit. If there aren't any then the information below is a good start:

- Only use non-petroleum based lubricants around your wrists, neck and ankles to prevent rubbing or to help you get the suit off such as Body Glide or Suit Juice. They are effective and won't rot the stitching or damage the neoprene.
- Rinse with fresh water after each use
- You can find wetsuit shampoo or use baby shampoo but you only need to use this occasionally.
- Dry inside out and away from direct sunlight or heat
- Once dry check to see if there's any damage.
- If you find any small nicks repair them immediately with black witch wetsuit glue.
- Store in a cool dry place on a wide/padded hanger to prevent creasing.
- For more serious issue with the suit then speak to TriCentral who can advise you on what to do.

Remember most suits come with a one year, repair or replacement warranty against any manufacturing related defects, but not accidental damage.

## **Putting it on**

Take care putting on your wetsuit. Whilst it is important to be able to get out of it quickly there is no race to put it on. You may need to ask a partner to assist you zipping the suit up:

- Remove watches or wrist jewellery
- Avoid nail contact with the neoprene, use finger tips to avoid tearing the smooth skin surface.
- If required apply any non-petroleum based lubricants (slip n glide, suit juice, Brave Soldier Friction Zone) to your wrist, neck and ankles.
- The zip of the suit goes to the rear.
- Step into the suit and working both legs up to your knees then your crotch. Make sure the suit is flush up to your crotch before beginning with the upper body.
- Slip in both arms working first one then the other up to your shoulder. Don't zip up the suit until most of the slack has been worked up to your shoulders.
- Ask for assistance zipping up your suit. Pull your shoulder blades together before asking a friend to close the zip.
- Remember that it will be much easier to make final adjustments once you are wet. Get the suit as comfortable as possible then jump into the water and swim for a few seconds, stop, readjust and work the remaining slack up to the crotch and shoulders. Now you're ready to go.

### **Taking it off**

- Begin removing your wetsuit as soon as you exit the water. It is easier to take off when wet.
- Pull down the zip and pull out your arms before pulling down the top half to your waist. From this position you should be able to run efficiently to your transition stall.
- Once you arrive at your stall take off your cap and goggles just before you reach your stall and throw them into your allocated area as you arrive.
- One movement should take the whole suit down to your knee, then standing up straight and without using your hands kick each leg up and out individually to free it.
- Finally place the suit into your allocated area.

Article taken from [www.man-tri-club.org.uk](http://www.man-tri-club.org.uk)