



- CALENDAR
- WHO'S WHO
- ENTERTAINMENT
- CELEBRITY PICKS
- FOOD & WINE
- INSIDER GUIDE
- REAL ESTATE
- CLASSIFIEDS
- SERVICE DIRECTORY
- HELP WANTED

HOME

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LATEST ISSUE

HAMPTON style  
LATEST ISSUE

*Montauk Pioneer*  
LATEST ISSUE

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ADVERTISE

MEDIA KITS

CLASSIFIEDS

ONLINE ADS

GETTING HERE

SHORTCUTS

TRAFFIC

WEATHER

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## Skin Deep

### Layering

By Samantha Altea

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"After the holidays, many of us will have gained a pound (or five), leaving us feeling a little plumper than we would like. Adding insult to injury, wearing thick warm coats and sweaters isn't the most flattering way to go when you don't feel like wearing your skinny-day pants and isn't always the best option for keeping warm, either.

It just so happens that one of the biggest fashion trends for this season is to layer (see my column, Fall Fashion) and, what do you know, layering can be one of the most flattering and effective ways to keep warm. Plus, with global warming and the hot / cold flashes that the weather seems to be dishing up so far this year, layering is the best way to combat temperamental temperatures. One can strip down to a base layer or two during sudden midday heat waves, or add layers during a cold snap. Additionally, layers are ideal for the temperature transition going from home, restaurant, bar, or store to wherever the wind blows you outside. You might say that layering IS multi-layered.

One of the first rules of layering is to think about underpinnings. If it's really cold out, the best underwear to wear is made of moisture-wicking fabric. The term "wicking" means that a specific fabric keeps you warm by lifting moisture away from your skin. There are many new and complex synthetic fabrics on the market that work wonderfully. Normally, one would keep WELL away from synthetic fabric when trying to keep warm, but in this case, if you see something with a label telling you it has "wicking" properties, it's an ideal under piece for a layered winter outfit. Wicking vests, long johns, and socks can be found in many stores, especially sports outlets. Wicking garments will always be made of extremely thin fabric and thus very easy to wear. You could also wear a first layer that is made of a natural wicking fabric like silk, wool, or finely knit cashmere. These work well, too.

The next layer can take many forms, perhaps in that of a cashmere sweater, again, low on bulk, or something made of fine Marino wool. These items can be mixed and matched pieces that will add dimension, color and warmth to an outfit. Remember that each layer must be fairly tight fitting so as to trap warm air next to the skin, which keeps us warm, and not loose so as to let the warm air out (or look unflattering and bulky.) You might want to show the hint of a previous layer beneath the top so as to add another color, or dimension to an outfit. And layers can be many...

Fashion-forward femmes are layering dresses over jeans, for example, and wool or cashmere tights. This look is an excellent example of layering pieces and very of-the-moment. Cardigans, jackets and outer layers complete the look and add the final layer of warmth. In order to make this all look fashion-forward and complimentary to the body, one can use an unusual mixture of fabrics, like cashmere with velvet, under something sequined or fur. The use of layers with interesting shapes and fabrics will also help to disguise unwanted pounds, lumps or bumps and also makes a great fashion statement.

If you can't resist your big fluffy sweater, there are some tricks to make it more flattering and a tad more fashionable. This year, a big trend IS to wear a big sweater, but not your grandma's sweater all by itself. Instead, take it up a notch and cinch it in at the waist with a big wide belt. So instead of looking like a marshmallow (especially if your sweater happens to be pink or white), you can wear bulk with style and show off your waist, making you look thinner. The biggest mistake people make is to wear a big bulky sweater when feeling overweight, thinking that they're covering up the extra pounds. It's a fallacy - bulk only makes you look bigger. So work such items in your favor and show off your middle for a more interesting, slimmer and curvaceous silhouette.

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