

Athletes use clothing to keep them cool

By Joe Palca, NPR

The cool weather in London is good news for the Olympic athletes because their bodies won't need to put as much energy into cooling off.

But most of us aren't lucky enough to be headed to London, and we could use some help keeping cool.

When you get hot you sweat – but it's not enough to just sweat. To cool off, you need that sweat to evaporate. It's evaporation that drains the heat from your body.

To help the sweat evaporate, you want air to flow over your skin – as much of your skin as possible. So the best clothing for people to wear when exercising is none at all.

That's according to George Havenith, a professor of environmental physiology and ergonomics at Loughborough University in Leicestershire, England.

“They would probably want to wear some underwear to just cover up and be comfortable in that way. But in terms of the heat loss, the naked person is best able to lose heat.”

That's only if the sun's not shining. If the sun's out, you need clothing to protect your skin from burning.

Read the whole story