

Beautiful Northern Idaho has several fantastic triathlons such as Race the River Triathlon and Radiant Lake Triathlon, each with potentially cold water for the swim. With water temps in the area ranging from 60 to 72 degrees, it definitely falls in the zone of being wetsuit-worthy.

While [triathlon wetsuits](#) can be a major investment, they can also have many benefits, especially if you might use the wetsuit repeatedly.

Are Wetsuits Worth It?

Triathlon wetsuits provide two main advantages: Warmth and Buoyancy. A good triathlon wetsuit will keep your body comfortable in even very cold water temps, so it can be a necessity if you'll be spending time in water that is below 60 or 65 degrees. Most triathletes will also tell you that a good wetsuit gives them more buoyancy, allowing them to glide over the water more easily and not kick quite as much. This can help your swim time, but can be especially useful if you are nervous about open water swims.

With prices of \$200 to \$700, however, wetsuits are not trivial expenditures. If you are considering an investment in a high quality wetsuit for the first time, there are three options. You of course can borrow one, rent one from a local or online triathlon shop, or purchase one of your own. While borrowing may be tempting, you would want to get just the right size – wetsuits should fit you perfectly or they will lose their effectiveness. Renting can be a great option if you aren't particular about the model and may just use the suit once. If you plan to do multiple open water swims, though, consider investing in a good wetsuit with a perfect fit for you. Read through some [triathlon wetsuit reviews](#), try a few on, and buy one that is right for you.

Using the Wetsuit

After purchasing, renting, or borrowing your wetsuit, try it on at home first. You have to practice a bit with these types of things, and may need help when you first try it on. Being sure to put it on when you are dry, and be careful not to tear it – Neoprene is a great material but can rip and puncture easily. Pull it all the way on, and try going for a quick swim at a local beach or cold pool. You will notice that when you're in the water your muscles will feel and react differently. You may need to adapt or change your swim strokes. Wetsuits cling to bodies so the feeling can be constrictive, but you will get used to the sensation so don't worry about it because after a few swim sessions it'll feel like a second skin.

Lubricate the leg and armholes of the suit or your body with a product like bodyglide. Such a lubricant will prevent chafing and if you get sore in those areas you won't be able to concentrate on swimming. Athletes have also used PAM or another cooking spray, but never use petroleum based lubricants because they will eat away at your suit. Water-based ones are fine.

A goal of every triathlete is getting out of a wetsuit fast after leg one. Grab your zipper as you run from the water and without getting all tangled up, get your arms out of the suit first. When you arrive at the bicycle area you can complete the removal. You can practice this at home so it'll be easy after the first few times during a race.

After the Race

A good triathlon wetsuit can last you several years if you take care of it, and this means spending some time on it after the race. Wash your suit with fresh water both outside and in after the race. Athletes do this outside using a garden hose, or in a shower. Hang the suit to air dry on an old fashioned clothesline or a heavy duty towel bar. After the season ends, use a shampoo like one made by McNett for cleaning the neoprene. It's gentle and you'll keep your investment in great shape for many seasons. Finally, find a storage space where there is no risk of it being torn or nicked by metal or edges.

Spending \$200 or more on a triathlon wetsuit may be daunting, but if you plan to do a few triathlons and open water practice swims, you'll find that it might be money-well-spent over the long haul.