



What You Should Know About Altitude Sickness

It doesn't matter whether you're physically fit or unfit, it takes about 72 hours to adjust to high altitude. You should drink plenty of water, even if you don't feel thirsty; eat a diet high in carbohydrates (the more activity you plan, the more carbs you should eat); reduce your salt intake and decrease alcohol and caffeine consumption. Avoid sleeping medications and narcotics and get plenty of rest. It's a good idea to spend a night in Denver or Colorado Springs before ascending up the Pass. Allow at least one day for each 1000 feet in elevation.

Fitness does not prevent altitude sickness.

Drink plenty of fluids to counteract the dehydrating effect of the drier mountain air.

The effects of alcohol are intensified at high altitude (one drink is like two).

Decrease your physical activity until you adjust to the environment.

Get plenty of sleep.

The symptoms of Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) include flu-like problems, headache, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, breathlessness or insomnia. The symptoms should subside in about three days. If you have a history of heart or respiratory problems, you should not overexert yourself. If you experience chest pain, don't mistake it for indigestion, seek medical attention. A small percentage of people may experience High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE) – a rapid accumulation of fluids in the lungs, most common in children and teenagers. Early symptoms include rapid or labored breathing, even at rest. Coughing may produce, clear, foamy or bloody sputum. Seek medical attention immediately

Treatment for AMS includes oxygen therapy and/or Diamox. Oxygen is easy to use and safe if used as directed, and will usually relieve the symptoms. Diamox is prescribed by a physician, usually 125 mg tablets taken two times a day to provide relief or treat insomnia.