

ALTITUDE SICKNESS "WHAT TO LOOK FOR AND WHAT TO DO"

1. Drink plenty of water. What you might think is altitude sickness might actually be dehydration, caused by the higher rate of water vapor lost from the lungs at higher altitudes. Avoid **caffeine** and **alcohol**, as these can increase the likelihood of dehydration. If it's humid and you're losing a lot of water through perspiration, maintain an electrolyte balance with sports drinks targeted specifically for this purpose.

If you have a headache, **drink one liter of fluid**, and take some acetaminophen (brand name: Tylenol). If the headache disappears completely and rapidly, and you have no other symptoms of AMS (see the next step), you're probably dealing with dehydration rather than altitude sickness.

2. Look out for the symptoms of altitude sickness. 20% of people develop mild symptoms at altitudes between 1920 to 2960 meters (6,300 to 9,700 feet). If you know you're getting enough water, the symptoms of altitude sickness will manifest themselves about 6 to 10 hours after ascent over 2000 meters (6,500 feet) above sea level and are comparable to those of a severe hangover:

- Loss of appetite
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fatigue or weakness
- Dizziness or light-headedness
- Insomnia
- Pins and needles
- Shortness of breath upon exertion
- Persistent rapid pulse
- Drowsiness
- Peripheral edema (swelling of hands, feet, and face)

3. Get emergency treatment if you observe life-threatening symptoms. Extreme altitude sickness can result in fatal conditions like high altitude pulmonary edema (HAPE) (fluid in the lungs) and high altitude cerebral edema (HACE) (swelling of the brain), both occurring in up to 2% of people adjusting to altitudes above 2700 m (9,000 feet). If any of the following symptoms are observed, medical treatment is necessary and an immediate descent should be made:

- persistent dry cough
- Fever
- shortness of breath even when resting
- headache that does not respond to analgesics
- unsteady walking
- increasing vomiting
- gradual loss of consciousness

4. Follow the "golden rule" - climb high, sleep low. Once you've made your way up past 3,000 meters (10,000 feet), do not ascend more than 300 meters (1,000 feet) per day to sleep. You can climb as high as you want, just make sure that you come back to a base camp that's no more than 300 m (1,000') higher than your previous night's sleeping elevation. This is a useful guideline to keep in mind if you're driving to a high altitude, as well.

5. Take it easy. The last thing you would want to do is to overexert yourself. It is harder to breathe at higher altitude and even if you are fit, you can still feel the effects if you push yourself too hard too quickly. Resting at the altitude at which you became ill is often the most effective remedy for altitude sickness (other than descent). You'll usually feel better in 1-2 (or up to 4) days.

IF AT ANY TIME YOU FEEL ALTITUDE SICKNESS, CONTACT SKI APACHE AT (575) 464 3600 FOR ASSISTANCE