

High Altitude Safety Fact Sheet

High altitude travel is generally considered travel above 8,000 feet. At 8,000 feet, there is only ~75 percent of the available oxygen at sea level. Oxygen decreases at ~3% with each 1,000 feet in elevation. UV intensity increases 4% for every 1,000 feet of elevation. Issues that can occur at high altitude include:

Falls
Sunburn
Hypothermia
Frostbite
Altitude Sickness
Snow Blindness

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

- ✓ Sunglasses
- ✓ Sunscreen
- ✓ Hat
- ✓ Warm clothing
- ✓ Sturdy boots
- ✓ Altimeter
- ✓ Ropes gear-If necessary

PREPARATION AND TRAINING

- ✓ Consult your primary care physician before the trip, especially if you have history with heart or lung disease or injury.
- ✓ Take a course in technical ropes training, if necessary.
- ✓ It is highly recommended you take a course in: Wilderness First Aid

GENERAL SAFETY

- ❖ Use sunscreen and sunglasses, even if weather is overcast.
- ❖ Maintain a slow, even pace.
- ❖ Breathe deeply.
- ❖ If your hike starts at high elevation, spend a few days adjusting to the altitude prior to hiking.
- ❖ It is best to sleep no more than 1,500 feet higher than you did the night before. This helps the body adjust gradually to the decreased amount of oxygen.
- ❖ Keep hydrated and well fed.
- ❖ Many people at high altitude have trouble sleeping due to altered breathing patterns. Do not take sleeping pills to address sleep issues at altitude.
- ❖ Humidity at high altitude can be low, which can aggravate the respiratory system and cause coughing fits. Breathing through a scarf or balaclava can help, as this will humidify and warm the air you breathe.
- ❖ Keep in mind emergency rescue services may have difficulty reaching your location. Do not take unnecessary risks.

REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Handbook](#) for laypeople traveling to high altitude from MedEx