



Altitude Sickness

What to know before coming on course.

Acute Mountain Sickness, commonly referred to as altitude sickness or AMS, is described as physical distress from difficulty adjusting to lower oxygen pressure at high altitude. Symptoms can include headaches (mild to severe), nausea, loss of appetite, fatigue, dizziness, vomiting, and trouble sleeping. These symptoms can range in severity depending on the person and the altitude at which you are traveling. Getting altitude sickness symptoms isn't linked to any specific trait or activity level, so anyone could exhibit symptoms upon arriving at higher altitudes. Many people experience symptoms on the second or third day at altitude.

While these symptoms can hit as low as 4,000 feet, they get more serious (and common) at 8,000 feet – the point at which you enter “high altitude”. Our river and canyon based courses typically operate at 4,000-6,000 feet. Utah mountain courses are usually at 8,000 feet or higher, and Colorado courses typically run at 10,000 feet or higher.

How We Mitigate Risk of AMS:

- Eat carbs rather than fats or proteins
 - Eating carbs for the first few days at altitude is helpful to replace depleted muscle glycogen stores and require less oxygen for metabolism.
- Sleep low
 - Courses do not sleep at the peaks of mountains. Instead, you will sleep at a lower elevation level, giving your body time to adjust to the changes.
- Drink LOTS of water
 - We encourage students to drink approximately 3-4 liters a day. You can prepare by starting to be extra hydrated a week before course start and continue to hydrate well when you arrive on course.
- Start slow
 - On course, you will not be summiting on your first day. We typically ease into activity to make sure everyone is acclimating to the change in altitude.

What You Can Do to Prevent Symptoms:

- Arrive early (if possible)
 - This will give your body time to adjust to the altitude change before jumping right into course.
- Increase your activity level
 - While activity level doesn't play a direct role in whether you will get sick at altitude, if you are active at sea level, you will likely do better with the fatigue associated with high activity at altitude.
- Get more rest than usual
 - Prioritize your sleep as preparation for this course! Give yourself plenty of time to get 8 hours of quality sleep per night.
- Take ibuprofen
 - Ibuprofen can help with some symptoms like headaches, nausea, and fatigue.
- Avoid alcohol 3 days before your course to help with hydration and reduce even mild hangover-like sensations.
- If you are taking prescription medications, consult your doctor about how altitude may affect them. Some drugs and our body's response to them change at altitude.