

Our team is experienced in managing the risks of altitude sickness and we will continuously monitor your health throughout your trek. To help us ensure you have a safe and enjoyable trek, we would appreciate if you would also read the information in this brochure so that you understand the risks of trekking in high altitude.



ALTITUDE SICKNESS FAQs

ALTITUDE CAN KILL!

Every year, people die due to altitude sickness. All of these deaths are preventable. If you are traveling above 2,500m (8,000ft) as part of your tour, please read this information.

What is altitude sickness?

Altitude sickness has three forms.

Mild altitude sickness is called acute mountain sickness (AMS) and is quite similar to a hangover. Whilst uncomfortable, it is not life threatening when dealt with timely and appropriately.

It is very common when climbing at altitudes above 2,500m, meaning you are at risk when trekking any of Africa's big mountains.

If AMS, is NOT appropriately managed you are at risk of the serious forms of altitude sickness.

High Altitude Cerebral Oedema (HACE)

Excess fluid on the brain. It causes confusion, clumsiness, and stumbling and the first signs may include uncharacteristic behaviour such as laziness, excessive emotion or violence.

High Altitude Pulmonary Oedema (HAPE)

Excess fluid on the lungs. It causes breathlessness and may also cause a fever (a high temperature) and/or coughing up frothy spit.

Both HACE and HAPE can be fatal!!!

The only cure for HACE and HAPE is to immediately descent.

What changes at high altitude?

The environment is completely different at high altitude compared to that at sea level. The air is thinner and temperatures are usually much colder. In order to survive, it is necessary to acclimatise to ensure your body can cope with the shortage of oxygen.

What causes altitude sickness?

Altitude sickness is a result of the air getting thinner as you ascend. This makes breathing harder.

Common symptoms:

- Headache
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Poor appetite
- Dizziness
- Sleep disturbance
- Fatigue, lethargy or breathlessness



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Go slow

- Walk slow & keep your heart rate low
- Be the last person to camp.
- Add an acclimatisation day (Adventure Out Loud already do this with all of our treks).

Sleep low

- Trekking to a higher altitude than you sleep allows your body to experience altitude for a short period before descending to sleep at a lower and safer altitude.

Rest

- International travel can disrupt your sleeping patterns, making you feel tired.
- Rest for a few days before ascent.
- Sleep 8 hours per night.

How can I prevent altitude sickness?

Stay hydrated

- Drink plenty of water (minimum of 3 litres per day).
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, soft drinks, salt and other dehydrating substances.

Eat well

- Eat a high carbohydrate diet (i.e.pastas, breads, fruits and potato based meals).
- Avoid loss of appetite by carrying muesli/energy bars, nuts and other tasty snacks during your trek.

Increase red blood cells

- Red blood cells carry oxygen to your tissues and organs and are needed for survival. You may like to test your red blood cell count prior to departure (optional).

Can I take drugs to prevent altitude sickness?

Acetazolamide (Diamox) can be used to reduce the effects of AMS and periodically help breathing. You can still get AMS, HAPE and HACE while taking this drug though. We recommend you consult a doctor before taking Diamox as some people are allergic. Temporary side effects include: tingling in the hands, feet and face and increased need to urinate and you should test to see if you are allergic before your trek. Painkillers may ease your headache, but they won't treat the condition.

What are the treatments for altitude sickness?

It is better to prevent acute mountain sickness than to try to treat it. Therefore, you should always follow these golden rules:

1. If you feel unwell, you have altitude sickness until proven otherwise.
2. Do not ascend further if you have symptoms of altitude sickness.
3. If you are getting worse then descend immediately.