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The Colorado Rockies beckon those from lower altitudes to experience the adrenalin rush that comes with ascending to heights, not to mention the view and the prospect of laying tracks in fresh powder.

Our visits tend to be short, though, and we may rush out and not prepare our bodies for the extreme altitude – the result can be altitude sickness, which feels like a nauseous headache.

Here are some tips as to how to prepare for a ski trip so that you get the most out of your adventure:

Preparing for High Altitude

Proper Clothing

Dress for cooler temperatures but be prepared for sudden weather changes. It's colder at higher altitudes and layers of clothing are a good idea. It may feel colder or warmer depending on whether it's windy or cloudy on one hand, or sunny with still air on the other. It's best to dress in layers and wear breathable clothing, such as smart wool that keeps moisture away from the skin.

Sunburn

Because of the thinner atmosphere and reflection from snow or water, you can sunburn much more easily than most people think. Ultraviolet light is more intense at higher altitudes. Be sure to protect your face and lips with appropriate sunscreen (at least 15 SPF), and protect your eyes with sunglasses or goggles.

Altitude Sickness

Perhaps as many as half the visitors from lower elevations experience some form of altitude illness. The vast majority of cases are self-limited and spontaneously resolve as the body acclimatizes. **Symptoms include fatigue, decreased appetite, shortness of breath with minimal exertion, nausea, headache and sleep disturbances.** These symptoms are often worse the second day at altitude (but resolve in four to five days). Rest is the key to treating mild forms of altitude sickness.

Avoiding Altitude Sickness

Stay Properly Hydrated: Acclimatization is often accompanied by fluid loss, so you need to **drink lots of fluids** to remain properly hydrated (**at least 3-4 quarts per day**).

Avoid tobacco and alcohol and other depressant drugs during acclimation, which can also lead to dehydration.

Light Activity during the day is better than sleeping because respiration decreases during sleep, exacerbating Altitude Sickness symptoms.

Avoid vigorous exercise until you acclimate: So, it is best to time your arrival in the afternoon before you ski, spend time getting equipment, doing leisure activities (how about a massage at the spa? or a swim in the pool? or a walking tour of the town), rather than activities that drain you of energy. Limiting exertion is better than using innumerable medications. Activities like running, hiking, lifting, straining etc can worsen the symptoms of altitude sickness. Gradually increase your activity, to give yourself time to adjust.

Symptoms of altitude sickness can include headache, nausea, vomiting, light-headedness, persistent rapid pulse, general malaise, pins and needles, fatigue, insomnia, and/or diarrhea.

Severe cases may be complicated by breathlessness and chest tightness, which are signs of pulmonary edema (fluid in the lungs), or by confusion, lethargy, and unsteady gait, which indicate cerebral edema (brain swelling).

The symptoms of altitude sickness develop gradually so that, with proper management, serious complications can usually be prevented, says MDTravelHealth.com.

[If you get Altitude Sickness, Remedies include:](#)

Drink Water: As your breathing is fast and deep, you tend to dehydrate more. So, drink water in considerable amount to keep yourself hydrated. Be at vigilance and check whether the urine is clear and in proper quantity. Alcohol can add to the dehydration problem and so, it is better to avoid it thoroughly, especially when you are climbing at higher elevations.

Acetaminophen: Rather than using drugs like aspirin, which have side effects, it's advisable to use acetaminophen, a safer drug conferring instant relief from pain at higher elevations.

Inhaling pure oxygen is a quick fix. The mountain shops generally sell small portable canisters. Products include Boost Oxygen.

Every canister of Boost Oxygen comes sealed to protect it from dirt and bacteria – so first remove the protective seal. Next, place the mask/mouthpiece UNDER your nose, covering your mouth. Don't cover your nose with the mask. Press the trigger down to start the oxygen flow and breathe deeply, inhaling for 1-3 seconds per use, then exhaling. Repeat 3-5 times as desired.

[Frostbite & Hypothermia](#)

Frostbite results from cooling of body tissues and subsequent destruction of these tissues. This occurs when skin is exposed to cold and windy conditions. Fingers, ears and noses are especially susceptible. The best cure is prevention. Keep the skin covered and warm up frequently. If blisters, occur or if fingers or toes are involved, seek medical attention immediately. Over exposure to cold, wetness or wind can cause a very low internal body temperature known as hypothermia. Warning signs include shivering, fatigue, slowed pulse and bluish lip color. Hypothermia is life threatening. Victims of hypothermia

should get to warmth and shelter, remove wet clothes, warm up in blankets, and drink warm, non-alcoholic beverages. Emergency medical attention should be sought immediately.

Sun

At 9600 feet, the sun is 40% stronger than at sea level. Apply sunscreen several times a day and always wear eye protection. Sunglasses or goggles with UV protection are a must. Lip balm/Chapstick is also a necessity.