



# ESTES PARK HEALTH

## Acute Mountain Sickness Altitude Sickness

Estes Park, CO is at 7,500 ft.

Hikers, skiers and adventurers who travel to high altitudes can sometimes develop acute mountain sickness. Other names for this condition are altitude sickness or high altitude pulmonary edema. **It typically occurs at about 8,000 feet**, or 2,400 meters, above sea level. Dizziness, nausea, headaches and shortness of breath are a few symptoms of this condition. Most instances of altitude sickness are mild and heal quickly. In rare cases, altitude sickness can become severe and cause complications with the lungs or brain.

### **What causes acute mountain sickness?**

Higher altitudes have lower levels of oxygen and decreased air pressure. When you travel in a plane, drive or hike up a mountain or go skiing, your body may not have enough time to adjust. This can result in acute mountain sickness. Your level of exertion also plays a role. Pushing yourself to quickly hike up a mountain, for example, may cause acute mountain sickness.

### **What are the symptoms of acute mountain sickness?**

#### **Mild acute mountain sickness**

If you have a mild case, you may experience:

- Dizziness
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Insomnia
- Nausea and vomiting
- Irritability
- Loss of appetite
- Swelling of the hands, feet and face
- Rapid heartbeat
- Shortness of breath with physical exertion

**Symptoms of severe acute mountain sickness:**

- Coughing
- Chest congestion
- Pale complexion and skin discoloration
- Inability to walk or lack of balance
- Social withdrawal

**Call 911 or seek emergency medical attention as soon as possible if you're experiencing any severe symptoms. The condition is much easier to treat if you address it before it progresses.**

**High Altitude Tips:**

- Check with your physician before going to a higher altitude
- Give your body time to acclimate to the new altitude
- Reduce alcohol, caffeine and salty foods
- Drink plenty of water
- Get plenty of rest
- Eat regularly – high carb meals
- Listen to your body and rest when needed

**Estes Park Health  
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eph.org**

**Call 911 for 24-hour Emergency Care and  
Ambulance Service**