

## High Altitude 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 the 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.

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- 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 lay people traveling to high altitude from MedEx

*Illness, injury and close call events shall be reported by submitting an [SU-17](#).*

If you have questions or need support, contact EH&S's Field Safety Program at [ehs\\_field\\_safety\\_support@lists.stanford.edu](mailto:ehs_field_safety_support@lists.stanford.edu).

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