

TIPS TO AVOID ALTITUDE SICKNESS

Don't be afraid! This is one of the most important tips for you. Because fear can play tricks on your mind and that in turn has a strong effect on your body. Again and again we've had the experience that people who are very afraid of altitude sickness really get ill in the end. But, be assured: only a small percentage of people can't adapt to altitudes above 3,500 m while following all the rules! Altitude sickness is very uncommon!

Rest in the beginning: When you arrive in high altitudes (especially above 3,000 m), you should immediately relax, put your feet up, no unnecessary activities, please! Not only because it is your vacation, but everything that quickens the pulse means your body has a higher demand of oxygen. The results can be: headaches, nausea, shortness of breath and other problems with adapting to the altitude. And the thing is – those discomforts and troubles are sneaking up on you, they might only appear many hours later! So, even if you feel good and strong at the moment, please try to do as little as possible for the first 24 hours and start your holidays slowly. This tip is especially targeted at our young, vibrant and athletic people, who are always hard to slow down!

Kule-Kule (Ladakhi for „slowly-slowly“): If it is too hard for you to stay inside and you have to get out and get going, please do it very slowly. Don't even walk at the same pace like you do at home – it might feel strange and funny to you, but when your heart is racing, you're definitely too fast! And that walk will have its revenge later: your head is aching, the heart races and you feel nauseous...

Hydrate! The rules are: 1 liter for each 1,000 difference in altitude. Please drink more than you would feel you need – your body needs it to make it easier to absorb oxygen. If you don't like to drink water, you can have tea, soup or fruit juices. But please, avoid caffeine and alcohol, at least initially.

Be careful with medication: Avoid too much medication – adaptation symptoms like headaches, nausea, sleeplessness, nose bleeds, etc. are very common in the beginning. Don't panic! They are only warning signs and normally, they will be gone quickly. So we recommend you be careful with medication intake, as it is important to observe the symptoms: does the headache get worse? Do I still feel nauseous? Of course, a good night's sleep is important, so you can take some pain pills or something against the nausea at night. Regarding Aspirin and Diamox: doctors specializing in altitude medicine don't have the same opinions about those drugs, there are some who are strictly against them, some recommend low dosage. We wouldn't recommend the use!

How am I? If those adaptation problems don't stop or even get worse, it is necessary to talk about it! Please tell your guide and your travel companions how you feel, every little detail can be important, it's better to say too much than to not talk at all. High altitude sickness is not a heart attack, coming from nowhere, its symptoms develop over days, very slowly. If you don't feel well even while following all the rules, your guide will recommend a descent. Most of the time you only need a few meters of altitude difference and you will feel better already!

Alcohol: Avoid it! Especially on the first days, you shouldn't drink alcohol, beer or wine, any liquor slows down the adaptation process!

Open the windows: Sleeping with a raised upper body is very helpful! And your body will thank you for sleeping in well aired rooms / tents! It also helps to walk 100 to 200 meters upwards and back down before getting to sleep. Please refrain from using sleeping pills, they delay the adaptation process!

Don-le („Please, eat!“ in Ladakhi): Eat well and lots of carbohydrates, even when you don't feel that hungry, we've experienced that many people travelling to high altitudes suffer from loss of appetite! You don't have to worry about gaining weight, as your body is burning much more calories at this altitude anyway!