



PREVENTING ALTITUDE SICKNESS

Some travel destinations have health risks. At altitudes above 2000 to 2500 metres, you may experience problems caused by the drop in air pressure and oxygen levels. Initial symptoms include headache, tiredness, lack of appetite, nausea and diarrhoea, irritability, insomnia, and dizziness. Mild cases only require treating the symptoms (painkillers for headache, for example), which should disappear on their own in a few days.

If you also experience respiratory distress, listlessness, vomiting or difficulty walking in addition to the symptoms described above, staying at the same altitude or going even higher poses a serious risk of the illness progressing to pulmonary oedema (too much fluid in the lungs) or cerebral oedema (brain swelling) at altitude. If this happens, seek medical attention immediately and go to a lower altitude.

If you have a heart or lung condition, anaemia, diabetes or any other illness that may affect you on this kind of travel, seek medical advice beforehand. Pregnant women and children also require special attention.

IF YOU SUFFER FROM ANY CHRONIC DISEASE, ALWAYS CONSULT A DOCTOR BEFORE TRAVELLING

Preventive measures

- Make your ascent gradually whenever possible:
 - Do not ascend directly to places of altitude above 2000 metres.
 - Spend a few days between 2500 and 2750 metres before continuing the ascent to allow your body to adapt to the low oxygen levels.
 - Above 2750 metres, don't ascend more than 500 metres each day.
 - For every 1000 metres, you climb, spend one day without ascending.
 - It's better to sleep at a lower altitude than during the day.

Sometimes your itinerary may not allow for a gradual ascent. In such cases, ask your doctor about prescribing medication to prevent illness.

- Keep to a light diet with plenty of liquids and carbohydrates.
- Don't drink alcohol, smoke or do heavy physical exercise, at least during the first 48 hours, when ascending above 2500 metres.

DRINK BEFORE YOU GET THIRSTY, EAT BEFORE YOU'RE HUNGRY, WRAP UP WARM
BEFORE YOU FEEL COLD, AND REST BEFORE YOU BECOME EXHAUSTED

PREVENTION & PROMOTION SERVICE – INTERNATIONAL HEALTH CENTRE

Montesa, 22, Edificio A, Planta Baja - 28006 MADRID