



## High-Altitude Sickness

[Source: TH](#)

The recent death of a trekker from Kerala due to [high-altitude sickness](#) (HAS) or **Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS)** while attempting to scale a **peak in Uttarakhand** has brought attention to the dangers of trekking in the mountains.

- Popular trekking routes often exceed 3,000 meters, increasing the risk of **AMS** among unacclimatised trekkers.
- [High-altitude sickness](#) occurs when individuals ascend rapidly to elevations **above 2,400 meters**, without adequate acclimatisation.
  - As altitude rises, both air pressure and oxygen levels drop, causing hypoxia, which is a shortage of oxygen in the body's tissues.
  - **Symptoms** include headaches, nausea, fatigue, and shortness of breath.
- **Severe cases of HAS/AMS** can lead to **High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE) and High Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE)**, both life-threatening conditions requiring immediate descent.
  - At high altitudes, the body adapts by increasing breathing (**can cause hyperventilation**) and producing more red blood cells, thickening the blood and straining the heart.
  - **HAPE causes lung fluid buildup**, and worsening breathing, while **HACE leads to confusion, hallucinations, and coma.**
- **Treatment Strategies:**
  - Supplemental oxygen or a portable hyperbaric chamber can help alleviate symptoms of **AMS** and **HACE** in emergencies.
  - Pharmacological treatments, such as **acetazolamide and dexamethasone**, may provide short-term relief.

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# ★ HOW TO SAFELY CLIMB A MOUNTAIN ★

## Go Slow And Steady



Avoid climbing **> 300 - 500m** per day, depending on your fitness level.



Plan **1 rest day** for every **600 - 900m** ascent.



**2 - 3 days** - the time for your body to get used to higher altitudes before going **> 3,000m**.



**1 - 1.5 litres** - the **extra** amount of water to consume daily when at high altitude.



**Excess caffeine + alcohol**



**Carbohydrate-rich diet**

## Stay Aware

**12 - 24 hours** timeframe for symptoms of altitude sickness to emerge upon reaching higher elevation.

**1 - 2 days** Time for altitude sickness symptoms to improve as body acclimatises.

### AMS symptoms:

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Sleep problems
- Appetite loss

### HAPE/HACE symptoms:

- Confusion
- Shortness of breath
- Inability to walk
- Coughing white/ pink frothy substance
- Coma

### 300m

Altitude at which AMS symptoms often improve. If symptoms worsen, descend immediately.



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