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## Fact Sheet: High Altitude

High altitude travel is generally considered travel above 8,000 feet (2438.4 m). At 8,000 feet, there is only ~75 percent of the available oxygen at sea level. Oxygen decreases at ~3% in volume with each 1,000 feet (304.8 m) in elevation. UV intensity increases 2% 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

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- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- Hat
- Warm clothing
- Sturdy boots
- Altimeter
- Ropes gear – if necessary

### Preparation and Training

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- 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 recommended you take courses in: [Wilderness First Aid](#)

### General Safety

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- Use sunscreen and sunglasses, even if 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 (457.2 m) higher than you did the night before. This helps the body adjust gradually to the decreased amount of oxygen.
- Keep hydrated and well fed.
- 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

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- [Information for people traveling to high altitude](#) from MedEx
- EPA – [A Guide to the UV Index](#)
- Adapted from *High Altitude Fact Sheet*, by University of Maryland: Department of Environmental Safety, Sustainability & Risk (<https://essr.umd.edu/about/research-safety/field-research-safety/planning>) with permission.