

Summit Newsletter

Advanced Issue

The Air Up There

By now, you've probably been bombarded with information about altitude sickness, but we wanted to remind you one more time just how different the altitude can be in Snowmass Village, Colo. The town is located more than a mile and a half above sea level, that's about three times higher than the world's tallest skyscraper. When you arrive, you may begin to find yourself gasping for air just trekking around town. That's simply because the higher you go, the less oxygen the air contains. On top of that, there is less atmospheric pressure up here, which makes it difficult for your body to absorb the little oxygen there is in the air.

So what does that mean to me?

Basically, your body has a harder time carrying oxygen through your bloodstream and can result in a condition called altitude sickness. Symptoms can be mild — headache, nausea, fatigue, loss of appetite and shortness of breath. Or they can be quite serious, such as swelling in the lungs and brain. These symptoms may not appear for hours or even days after you reach high altitude. However, if you're visiting a cold climate such as Snowmass, exerting yourself and suffering dehydration from dry mountain air, altitude sickness can become serious quite rapidly.

What can I do?

Don't drink! Alcohol causes dehydration, which worsens altitude sickness. It's important to drink plenty of nonalcoholic and decaffeinated beverages to stay well hydrated during your entire stay.

One of the primary causes of altitude sickness is a rapid ascent (such as flying in) combined with overexertion. If you experience symptoms of headache, nausea and shortness of breath, stop. If your symptoms get severe, begin to descend immediately to prevent the serious stages of altitude sickness from developing.

Because overexertion is a main cause, it's a good idea to take it easy for a few days until your body can acclimate. Moderate exercise is better than bed rest however.

A diet high in carbohydrates such as fruits and starches can help increase blood oxygen levels and alleviates some of the symptoms. A high-fat diet does the opposite.

Make your trip to the Clinic enjoyable. Take it easy the first few days, stay well hydrated, get plenty of rest, eat well and don't kill yourself on the slopes. If you start to experience headache, fatigue, nausea or shortness of breath, it's time to slow down.

Injuries occur more often when you're tired, so if you can't decide whether to get that last activity in, stop and have a cup of hot chocolate by a fire instead. The Clinic will still be there tomorrow!

When in doubt, and for severe symptoms, please contact a medical professional as soon as possible. Information for the medical room at the Clinic is presented on the back page of the *SUMMIT* daily.

Making your way to Miracle Mountain

Our goal is to make your travel to Snowmass Village as easy as possible. Here are a few tips to help get you on your way.

The majority of planes flying into Aspen are regional jets and therefore on the very small side. So prepare to be cramped, and don't plan on carrying on any large bags. You will be able to check them at the gate however.

Travel in and out of Aspen can be a bit tricky. Snow conditions can often affect your departure and arrival times. In some cases you may have to take a bus from Denver. The gate agents can help you with any questions you have about your connection.

Let the airlines know if you are a special-service requested customer so that the necessary personnel and arrangements can be made in advance.

Pack a carry-on with essentials, including all medications, toiletries and a change of clothes. Checked luggage can get lost during layovers and can take awhile to arrive at the hotel.

Use the baggage tags provided in your welcome packet for your luggage. These color-coded tags are essential for identifying your luggage and to getting it to the right place.

At the Airport

Once you arrive at the airport, proceed downstairs to the terminal. There will be greeters waiting for you to arrive who will guide you and provide information. Volunteers will also be available to assist with gathering luggage and loading it onto shuttle buses. Some light refreshments will be waiting for you inside the terminal as you wait for your luggage to arrive on the carousel.

Getting to Snowmass Village

Shuttle service will be available from the airport to Snowmass on Sunday, March 25, from 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Volunteers will be on hand to assist with luggage and boarding. If you are arriving before or after this time frame, you will need to make your own arrangements.

The Weather

Weather in Snowmass can be quite varied this time of year. We could have snowstorms and wintery conditions, or it could be sunny and feel like spring. The average highs this time of year range from 46 to 53 degrees, with lows from 27 to 35 degrees. Keep the weather in mind with you pack, and bring a variety of clothing, it's always best to layer when you're out on the mountain, so that if the weather changes you will be prepared.

Countdown to the Clinic

The 2012 National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic begins in less than one week! All of the staff from the Department of Veterans Affairs, Disabled American Veterans and our sponsors has been hard at work preparing for your arrival, with hopes that you all are as excited as they are. There will be a lot of things going on throughout the week, so make sure you get a chance to do as much as you can. Consult with your team leaders if you have any questions about where to go and what to do. Don't forget that registration for the Clinic begins on Monday, March 26 at 12 noon in the Convention Center (connected to the Silver Tree hotel). Veterans will receive important information and details about the events throughout the week.