

## Staying Healthy in High Altitude

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KRI Courses are a very special event, and we gather in a very special place. As beautiful as our sacred land is though, the environment can be a little challenging. Among its challenge is its sheer altitude. The air is thinner than you might think, and flatlanders (that's most of us) are breathless, tired, and headachy for the first few days. Let's not even start with the dryness.....

The direct cause for the misery is thin air -and a decreased amount of available oxygen for all your organs. Your body counterbalances oxygen starvation by increasing your heart and respiratory rates, causing more blood to be pumped to all your assorted body parts. Chemical changes in the blood allow more oxygen to be released into the body tissues. Sounds good so far, you say? Well, one of the drawbacks is that some tissues (hands, feet, face) tend to accumulate fluids. Maybe you're familiar with a swollen head but, at this altitude, even your brain swells a little.

### Symptoms

Altitude sickness develops in stages. Mild symptoms can develop within hours, or may show up within a few of days after arriving. Mild forms of altitude sickness appear as headaches and insomnia, and are frequently harmless and short-lived. Once you have arrived at this higher altitude, it takes about two to four days for the body to acclimatize to the thinner air, and the symptoms will disappear.

### Watch out for these symptoms:

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Nausea
- Loss of appetite
- Insomnia
- Bizarre dreams
- Frequent waking
- Shortness of breath
- Heavy/light breathing cycles
- Difficulty breathing
- Decrease ability to exercise or perform work
- Mental sluggishness
- Forgetfulness
- Apathy

### Get Altitude Adjustment

There are key steps to remember whenever venturing to this altitude:

- Allow time for your body to acclimatize
- Rest a day or two before strenuous activity
- Move slowly until you are acclimatized
- Recognize early warning signs and seek relief

## Be prepared

When it comes to altitude, there is no substitute for common sense. Still, there are complementary methods that can speed up your ability to acclimatize to the altitude:

- Eat healthfully for a while before you leave for Española.
- Two days before arriving, consume plenty of complex carbohydrates to enhance blood oxygen.
- For several days, take antioxidant vitamins C and E.
- Take co-enzyme Q10 (CoQ10) to promote cellular oxygen uptake.
- Use L-tyrosine in the morning to boost your metabolism.
- Use some potent herbal medicine to ease your adjustment. Ginkgo promotes circulation. Reishi mushroom, Rhodiola, ginseng, eleuthero, osha, and red clover all bump up circulation and stamina and have proven their worth for altitude distress in the past. You may not need these. Put together a personalized selection.
- Avoid alcohol.

## Survival after the Arrival

- Too late for advance preparation? Not to worry. There are many simple things you can do to stay healthy and (more or less) comfortable while you adjust.
- Stick to the KRI diet
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Sipping small amounts every 15 minutes helps keep you hydrated. Imbibe the special electrolyte drink provided. Tasty!
- Continue your antioxidants and blood support supplements.
- Stop every four to six minutes and take 10-12 deep breaths.
- You wouldn't bring alcohol to a KRI Course, but if you did drink it, it would be dehydrating.

The rugged environment is part of the KRI Courses and an integral aspect of the experience, you'll do fine, no matter what challenges Mother Nature stirs up. Even so, you'll do even better if you pamper yourself just a little at first and use some tools to help you excel in the desert climate.

The diet, Exercise and lifestyle suggestions in this handout come from ancient yogic traditions. Nothing in this handout should be construed as medical advice. Any recipes mentioned herein may contain potent herbs, botanical and naturally occurring ingredients which have traditionally been used to support the structure and function of the human body. Always check with your personal physician or licensed health care practitioner before making any significant modification in your diet or lifestyle, to insure that the ingredients or lifestyle changes are appropriate for your personal health condition and consistent with any medication you may be taking. For more information about Kundalini Yoga as taught by Yogi Bhajan, please see [www.yogibhajan.org](http://www.yogibhajan.org) and [www.kundaliniresearchinstitute.org](http://www.kundaliniresearchinstitute.org)