



## HIGH ALTITUDE AND THE VACATIONER

### *Welcome to Colorado's Beautiful Rocky Mountains!*

Every year skiing, hiking, hunting, and other sports enthusiasts head for the high country of Colorado. As a result of the decreased oxygen at high elevations, Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) may occur.

Fortunately Acute Mountain Sickness can be prevented. Local physicians recommend the following guidelines to help make your high altitude vacation a safe and pleasurable one:

### HOW TO AVOID ALTITUDE ILLNESS

- 1) Take it slow and allow time for your body to adjust to the external environment. Strenuous exercise may trigger **AMS**.
- 2) Drink six to eight glasses of water or juice a day.
- 3) Avoid alcohol or use only in moderation, as it aggravates high altitude symptoms.
- 4) Consult your physician before traveling to a high altitude area if you have a heart condition, lung disease or diabetes.

### ACUTE MOUNTAIN SICKNESS (AMS)

Individuals who ascend too rapidly to elevations 7,000 feet or higher are to some degree affected by the lower oxygen content and low humidity.

### WHO GETS AMS?

It is difficult to predict who may or may not develop AMS. Although children are believed to be more susceptible, anyone can get sick at high altitude. Even the physically fit person is not immune.

### SYMPTOMS

A sudden change in elevation from sea level to high altitude can affect individuals with a variety of symptoms, including headache, fatigue, shortness of breath, sleeplessness, dizziness, nausea, mild swelling of hands, face or ankles, coughing, diarrhea or constipation. These symptoms usually disappear in a few days as your body adjusts to the lower oxygen levels.

### TREATMENT

If you find yourself suffering from any of the above symptoms, the best treatment is aspirin, plenty of fluids and limited activity. Descent is usually unnecessary. If symptoms persist, seek medical attention.

**NOTE: Seek medical attention immediately if shortness of breath and coughing are severe, or if there are any signs of loss of muscular coordination, mental confusion, or sluggishness.**