

# Cheat Sheet: How to Avoid Altitude Sickness in Tibet

## 1 Best Method to Avoid Altitude Sickness: ASCEND SLOWLY

- Take at least 2 days to reach 9000 feet/~2700 meters
- After you reach 9000 feet/~2700 meters, do not increase your sleeping altitude more than ~1500 feet/ ~500 meters per night.
- Take a rest day every ~3000 feet/~1000 meters.

Example: Avoid flying directly to Lhasa from sea level.

## 2 Altitude Sickness Medications

1. If you have no choice but to ascend too high, too fast, and are at moderate or high risk of altitude sickness, talk to your doctor about the possibility of taking Diamox (acetazolamide).

### **Moderate Risk: Diamox Would Help and Should be Considered**

- People who have not had altitude sickness before ascending to between 9200 feet/2800 meters and 11,400 feet/3500 meters in one day.
- People who have had AMS previously, and who ascend to 8200-9200 feet/2500-2800 meters in one day.
- Anyone ascending over 1600 feet/500 meters a day (in sleeping elevation) above 11,400 feet/3500 meters.

### **High Risk: Diamox is Strongly Recommended**

- Anyone ascending to more than 11,400 feet/3500 meters in one day. (Flying to Lhasa from Chengdu, for example)
- Anyone who ascends more than 1600 feet/500 meters per day in sleeping elevation at altitudes above 11,400 feet/3500 meters.
- People who have had AMS previous, and who ascend to ~ 9200 feet/2800 meters or more in one day.
- Anyone who has already had HAPE or HACE. (Get the definition of AMS, HACE and HAPE here.)

2. If you are going very high in remote places, you might want to talk to your doctor about getting prescriptions for medications that treat HACE and/or HAPE.

## 3 Natural Remedies

There are a number of herbal or homeopathic remedies – such as coca leaves, rhodiola, ginkgo biloba, and herbal Chinese medicines – being used by travelers for altitude sickness. **Unfortunately, there is not yet enough reliable clinical evidence for any of them that supports their efficacy or use.**

## 4 Do's and Don'ts at High Altitude

### Don't

- Drink alcohol
- Engage in strenuous exercise (Like climbing the steps of the Potala in Lhasa.)

### Do

- Eat plenty of carbs, to aid ventilation and efficient use of oxygen.” (Himalayan Rescue Association)
- Drink plenty of water (but not too much – the benefits of forced hydration is a myth.)

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Disclaimer: The information provided in this post is for educational purposes only, to give you general information and understanding of altitude sickness, not to provide specific medical advice. By reading this post you understand that there is no professional relationship between you and the authors. It is critical that you consult with your physician before you decide that it is safe for you to travel to Tibet, and before you take any of the medicines or steps mentioned in this series of posts.

### Credits:

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's CDC Health Information for the International Traveler, chapter on altitude sickness

