

## Aspen Nightlife and the Altitude

There is more to do in Aspen than ski! The Aspen nightlife is like nothing you will experience elsewhere. The warmth and camaraderie of all of the skiers, from all of the different lodges is quite special, and remarkable. You will have a good time in Aspen, no matter what you choose to do, but there is one thing that you should be very aware of before you start your party - the altitude.

Aspen sits about 8000 feet above sea level. Unless you live in a high altitude area, you will need to adjust to this altitude. You may find yourself feeling dizzy or light headed, and you may even find it a bit difficult to breath. Altitude Sickness is a serious problem, and if your symptoms become extreme, you should seek medical attention.

If you will be drinking, you need to know that the altitude will have a large impact on the way your body handles the alcohol. Many people who are not used to such a high altitude find that they become drunker on much less alcohol, in a very short period of time. It is best that you avoid drinking alcohol at all until you have adjusted to the altitude.

It is also important to recognize the signs of both Altitude sickness and Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS). Altitude sickness can be recognized by hyperventilation, shortness of breath during exertion, increased urination, changed breathing patterns at night, strange dreams, and frequently waking from sleep during the night. Acute Mountain Sickness, on the other hand, is recognized by loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, fatigue or weakness, dizziness, light-headedness, difficulty sleeping, confusion, and a staggering gait.

As you can see, the symptoms of both Altitude Sickness and Acute Mountain Sickness somewhat resemble the symptoms of drinking too much alcohol. The only way to rule out being drunk is to not drink for at least 48 hours after your arrival in the higher altitude. You should

also seek medical attention if your symptoms last more than 48 hours, or if you show signs of Acute Mountain Sickness. AMS can be deadly if it is not treated.

Health care professionals suggest that you avoid drinking alcohol because the effects are magnified at a high altitude. Avoid strenuous activity for the first couple of days after arriving at the higher altitude. Drink extra fluid and visit a doctor if you have symptoms of AMS immediately for treatment.

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