

High Altitude awareness in Albuquerque, New Mexico

There are a lot of beautiful hikes in New Mexico, and Albuquerque is no exception since some of the city's many hiking trails are just outside the city limits. If you haven't hiked in mountains and high-desert terrain before though, it is wise to learn about altitude sickness and how to prevent it from happening.

Altitude Sickness and High Altitudes

Though Albuquerque is a desert, the city's altitude is over 5,000 feet, at least one mile above sea level. The surrounding mountains are even higher. The Sandia Mountains are over 10,300 feet above sea level, with the highest crests at over 12,000 feet. People who aren't accustomed to such high altitudes sometimes suffer from altitude sickness when first visiting the city. If you are from a sea level place or are used to lower altitudes, please keep that in mind – most people feel tired until they adjust, and that feeling is intensified if you go hiking or rock climbing without being careful. Ascending hikes in the mountains right away may give you a headache or make you slightly dizzy. Other symptoms of altitude sickness include fatigue, nausea/vomiting, and sleep disruptions. If you experience any of these symptoms, do not climb any higher as the symptoms could get worse and become serious. Descend as soon as possible if the symptoms don't improve and see a doctor. Altitude sickness can occur after one to two days of being in a high altitude environment. It can happen to anyone regardless of fitness level, gender, or body type.

Altitude Sickness Tips

To cure altitude sickness, your body must either acclimatize or descend to a level it's used to. Get plenty of rest and don't exercise until you're feeling better. Mild to moderate cases clear up on their own in a few days. Albuquerque tends to have very low humidity, so drink a ton of water. Staying hydrated will help your body adjust to the less concentrated oxygen in the air. Current recommendations are an ounce of water per pound of body weight a day, so if you are 100 lbs, that would be 100 ounces of water. You can get by with drinking less, but keeping up on your water intake makes activities easier. Since it is so dry here, you don't obviously sweat and tend to forget you are losing body water. You can also get sunburned and intoxicated faster in higher elevation, so you might not want to consume alcoholic beverages, and bring plenty of sunscreen with you.

It is said that for every thousand feet of elevation you can expect a five to ten degree temperature drop, so the higher you go the colder it gets. For example, it may be 95 degrees in the city but it can still be 60 at Sandia Crest. So bring a few extra layers, especially if you mean to be away from the car for a while.

Information provided by [Smarter Travel](#)