

Altitude sickness self-check

The 2018 Lake Louise score, the two red-flag branches, and the field action for each result.

1
SCORE

2
RED FLAGS

3
ACT

BEFORE YOU SCORE

Setting: recent ascent
The score applies after ascent to a new altitude — not at home, not at the roadhead.

Wait 6+ hours
Assess at least 6 hours after reaching a new sleeping altitude. Onset is usually 2–12 h.

Re-score on change
Symptoms often show during or after the first night. Score again whenever they shift.

STEP 1 · SCORE EACH ROW 0–3

SYMPTOM	0	1	2	3
Headache	0 None ☐	1 Mild ☐	2 Moderate ☐	3 Severe ☐
Appetite / nausea	0 Good appetite ☐	1 Poor appetite or nausea ☐	2 Moderate nausea ☐	3 Severe nausea ☐
Fatigue / weakness	0 Normal ☐	1 Mild ☐	2 Moderate ☐	3 Severe ☐
Dizziness	0 None ☐	1 Mild ☐	2 Moderate ☐	3 Severe ☐
TOTAL SCORE				____ / 12

Matches AMS by this score: headache at least 1 *and* total at least 3, in the setting of recent ascent.

3–5
MILD

6–9
MODERATE

10–12
SEVERE

A field score is not a medical diagnosis. The 2018 update removed the old disturbed-sleep item — poor sleep tracks hypoxia but is not part of the score.

STEP 2 · RED FLAGS — CHECK THESE EVERY TIME YOU SCORE

HACE · BRAIN
Confusion, drowsiness, altered behaviour — can look like alcohol intoxication.
Companion test: heel-to-toe walking. Stumbling or stepping off the line is the clearest field sign.

HAPE · LUNGS
Breathless at rest, wet cough, crackles, falling performance. Early signs can be a cough and unusual breathlessness on exertion.
HAPE can occur without AMS — do not wait for a headache.

Either flag changes the decision below. Do not wait for morning.

STEP 3 · ACT ON THE RESULT

MILD AMS → HOLD ALTITUDE

- Do not go higher while symptoms continue.
- Hydrate, treat the headache, keep exertion low.
- Reassess in **12–24 h**; AMS usually eases in 12–48 h if you stop ascending.

MODERATE / WORSENING → STOP ASCENDING

- No improvement, or getting worse: **descend at least 300 m.**
- Keep descending until symptoms resolve.
- Exert the person as little as possible.

HACE OR HAPE → DESCEND NOW

- Go down immediately** — 300–1,000 m for AMS/HACE, at least 1,000 m for HAPE.
- Oxygen if available; target SpO2 ≥ 90%.
- Never leave the person alone.**