



- Altitude training is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Altitude training is beneficial in about 85 per cent of cases. Some athletes don't cope; however, you can improve your chances by measuring pulse oximetry, which can be used to help control the altitude 'dosage'.

- Extended periods at altitude exposure can result in weight loss – both muscle mass and body fat. Altitude exposure stimulates leptin release, the hormone that suppresses appetite, so be aware of this.

- Altitude training will likely dehydrate you. You'll be breathing deeper and harder than usual, drying out your airways, so drink more than you usually would.

- The beneficial effects of altitude training last for about three-to-four weeks after you return from the mountains. Timing your performance to peak after a time at altitude is the key and this differs for different people. The best way to establish this on an individual basis is via trial and error.

- If you're using altitude in the mountains and hills for training, do your base work at lower intensities and higher altitudes for two-to-four weeks, then commence the more intense, specific training at lower elevations. The base work can be done at higher altitudes (e.g. up to 4000 metres) whereas the more specific training should be done at lower altitudes (e.g. 1800-to-2000m).

- Well-trained athletes can sometimes struggle more at altitude than lesser trained or non-athletes. It is thought that this is because athletes are used to being hypoxic (oxygen deprived) in training, so living in a hypoxic environment doesn't drive their adaptation

process as quickly as it does for those not used to being hypoxic. Consequently, some athletes have a more blunted response to altitude training than non-athletes.

- Males seem to adapt more quickly to altitude than females. This is possibly due to women having a higher iron turnover (due to menstruation) than men. If you are going to the mountains to train at altitude – get a blood test before you leave to ensure you're not iron deficient.

- When adapting to altitude, increase your intake of carbohydrate.

- Many athletes complain of an altitude 'hangover' during the acclimation period. These hangovers are characterised by intensive flat spots in training through weeks two, three or four. Normally, two-to-three days at low altitude, coupled with lighter training, is enough to turn this around.

Mountains can be your friends for the reasons I've indicated above. They can improve your flat land and sea-level performances; but they can also render you totally incapacitated for various reasons. I remember many years ago training in France with a wiry, old Italian cyclist who warned me, "Rod, be careful, the mountains they can eat you!"

Train sensibly, use the mountains and the hills intelligently and they will provide you with another string (or six) to your bow. **T**



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