

Coping with Asthma on CRMS Trips

We are finding that an increasing percentage of students arrive at CRMS with some form of Asthma; though the overall incidence remains low, the fact remains that asthma is a fact of life for many. Generally asthma is caused by an allergic reaction, although asthma-like symptoms are also often triggered by intense exercise, and/or cold temperatures. Regardless of the trigger, asthma attacks typically result in an overproduction of mucus and a constriction of the bronchi leading to the lungs. This leads to difficulty breathing, particularly during exhalation.

Here are some things you can do to minimize the possibility of an adverse asthmatic reaction on Wilderness.

- Consult your doctor. Tell them about CRMS Wilderness and specifically that you will be undertaking a ten-day backpacking expedition at high altitude in Colorado. Ask your doctor for any additional medications (other than your usual asthma meds) that you may be able to use if you should find yourself experiencing a severe asthma attack. Inquire about contraindications for your medications.
- Staying extra-hydrated may also help minimize asthmatic reactions.
- Arriving at CRMS in good physical shape may also give you a reliable indicator of what you are capable of and how to better manage your asthma condition.

As long as you have prepared yourself for Wilderness Session by getting in good shape, staying extra-hydrated, and consulting your doctor, there is little reason for asthma to interfere with your full participation in CRMS Wilderness and other Active Curricular activities. If you have asthma, please communicate with your Leader when you arrive at CRMS regarding medications you may be taking.

Source

Wilkerson, James A., *Medicine for Mountaineering & Other Wilderness Activities* The Mountaineers, Seattle, WA 1998.