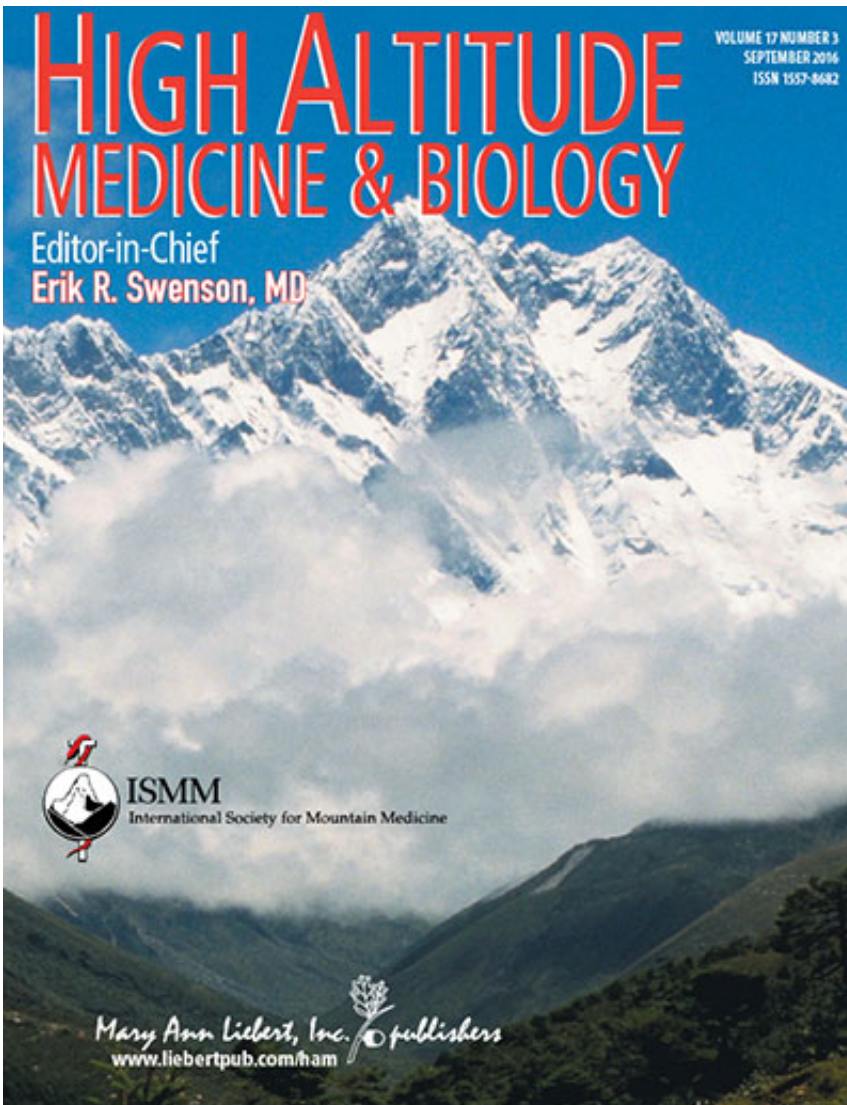


# Do most Mount Everest climbers use medications, and should they?

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The ethics of using medications to improve performance and increase the likelihood of success in high-altitude climbing remains a controversial topic, and a new study that asked climbers of Mount Everest their opinions and assessed their use of medications and oxygen provides new insights in an article published in *High Altitude Medicine & Biology*.

The article "Medication Use Among Mount Everest Climbers: Practice and Attitudes" is coauthored by Andrew Luks, MD, University of Washington, Seattle, Colin Grissom, MD, Intermountain Medical Center and the University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Luanne Freer, MD, Yellowstone National Park, Bozeman, MT and Himalayan Rescue Association Everest Base Camp Medical Clinic, Nepal, and Peter Hackett, MD, University of Colorado, Denver, and Institute for Altitude Medicine, Telluride, CO.

The researchers report that less than half of the climbers surveyed reported using medications on climbs. The most commonly used medication was acetazolamide to prevent [altitude sickness](#).

"This article by Luks et al. and another recent article by a group on Mt Blanc in the French Alps, in which drug levels were measured in urine collected from a common toilet used by many climbers on the way to the summit, give independent and confirmatory data that drug use by mountaineers is mostly and appropriately for altitude illness prophylaxis and sleep quality, and not for performance enhancement or recreational pleasure," says Erik R. Swenson, MD, Editor-in-Chief of *High Altitude Medicine & Biology* and Professor, Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine, Veterans Administration Puget Sound Healthcare System. "Rumors of rampant drug abuse appear to be disproven."

**More information:** Andrew M. Luks et al, Medication Use Among Mount Everest Climbers: Practice and Attitudes, *High Altitude Medicine*

*& Biology* (2016). [DOI: 10.1089/ham.2016.0077](https://doi.org/10.1089/ham.2016.0077)

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