problems without acclimating. Intentionally breathing harder may help, but it’s hard to concentrate on that when so many other things are going on and overdoing it makes us dizzy. It is likely that the most uncomfortable moments will be during rest stops when exercise is no longer stimulating breathing and the oxygen level in our blood drops. The continuous slow pace which helps conserve glycogen and saves us time in the long run may also prevent the headache by eliminating rest stops.

"Few of us can afford to make climbing Mt. Hood a 2-3 day venture, but there are some ways we can minimize the problems without acclimating."

If you repeatedly have trouble with symptoms of mountain sickness, a trial of acetazolamide (Diamox) to stimulate your breathing, might be helpful. If okayed by your physician, take 125 mg 1-2 hours before reaching the altitude at which you previously developed the symptoms. Remember though, that acetazolamide is a weak diuretic (causes a little bladder fullness) and by making you breathe faster may also cause some tingling in your fingers. Oddly enough, the individuals who need to have their breathing stimulated also tend to be fluid retainers at altitude, so the diuresis is not an unwanted side effect. It just means that if you don’t need it, don’t take it.

So, hold on to your glycogen; don’t forget to breathe; and enjoy the sunrise from the summit.
About Steve Boyer, M.D.

Dr. Steve Boyer speaks with particular expertise on the subject of energy and respiratory requirements in aerobic mountaineering. Currently a Portland emergency room physician, Dr. Boyer is also an accomplished climber and athlete. He has participated in 3 Mt. Everest expeditions and has summited Annapurna via the South Face route. Dr. Boyer has set several speed records for Mt. Hood climbs (round trip from: Portland, bike/climb - 10:16; Government Camp - 3:14; Timberline Lodge - 2:06) and in 1992 was nationally-ranked in several Masters Track and Field steeplechase events (1st in the 3000m event.) We are proud to claim Dr. Boyer as a Portland Mountain Rescue alumnus.

Portland Mountain Rescue is a group of dedicated Portland-area climbers that provides search and rescue services on a volunteer basis. We do not charge for our services and receive no money from government agencies. We rely on contributions from the public to fund our activities. Your tax-deductible contributions are greatly appreciated and can be mailed to the address below.

The Safety Essentials Series Educational Brochure is produced by Portland Mountain Rescue as a service to climbers.