

FITNESS



Have a question?
Email us at
askski@skimag.com.

ASK SKI

I stretch my hamstrings constantly, but they're still tight. Please help.

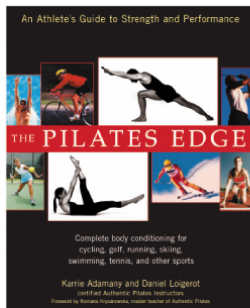
Weighty Concerns

Want to slim your chances of an altitude-sickness episode? Start by slimming your waistline. **By Julie Upton**

IF THE PROMISE OF better turns, easier hikes and more enjoyable mountain bike rides won't lure you to the gym, maybe this news will: Packing extra pounds makes you a prime candidate for altitude sickness. A recent study found that 78 percent of obese people experienced symptoms of altitude sickness, compared to 40 percent

of normal-weight people, when placed in an altitude chamber simulating 12,000 feet. Researchers note that the 78 percent would likely have been even higher if the test subjects had been exercising. It's unclear why extra pounds increase altitude-sickness risk, but impaired lung function that leads to shortness of breath appears to be one piece of the puzzle.

Your instinct to loosen your hamstrings is right on: Tight hams can harm your stance, hinder your ability to react to changing terrain and even lead to injury. For a better stretch, check your form. People often round their backs when stretching their hamstrings—which nicely loosens the back, but not necessarily the back of the legs. Instead, lie on your back with your legs flat on the floor. Your lower back should be slightly arched with your hands stacked, palms down, beneath it. Keep your legs straight and slowly lift one leg until you feel a stretch, maintaining light pressure on your hands. Hold for 30 seconds. Start stretching now, and you'll be in fine form come winter.



REVIEW

The Core Issue

Follow our "Gym Busters" cross-training suggestions (page 97), and your legs and lungs should stay plenty strong through the off-season. Your core, however, needs special attention year-round. To keep your abs—and your turns—rock-solid, shed your fitness-mat phobia and pick up a copy of *The Pilates Edge*. It offers clear exercise descriptions and outlines workouts tailored to skiers, golfers, cyclists, swimmers, runners and tennis players. Stick with three 20-minute sessions per week throughout the summer, and we won't make you do squats till September. —Kellee Katagi