

Advice for those travelling to the Hajj

Prior to travelling

- Consult your travel healthcare practitioner 6-8 weeks in advance of travel for assessment of your particular health risks, risk management advice and advisable vaccines.
- Follow the visa and vaccination requirements issued by Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ministry of Health: <https://www.moh.gov.sa/en/Hajj/Pages/default.aspx>

During the Hajj

Hand hygiene

Regularly washing your hands is one of the most effective ways to reduce the spread of bacteria and viruses that can make you and others unwell.

Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water or hand sanitiser:

- after coughing or sneezing
- before and after preparing food
- prior to eating and drinking
- after going to the toilet



Water hygiene

Water may contain chemical pollutants, harmful bacteria and viruses.

- Water should only be consumed if its safety is known.
- This also applies to water used for making ice cubes and cleaning teeth.
- Always check seals on bottled water are intact before use.



Food hygiene

Harmful bacteria that cause food poisoning can form quickly on food that has been inappropriately prepared, cooked or stored. Taking these actions will reduce your risk of food poisoning:

- thoroughly wash your hands, surfaces, utensils and equipment before, during and after preparing food
- always thoroughly wash vegetables in safe water before use
 - always peel fruit, including tomatoes
 - salads and fresh herbs (including in drinks) should be avoided



- meat, rice and vegetables should be properly cooked through, served hot and ideally eaten immediately
 - if cooked food cannot be consumed immediately it should be cooled as quickly as possible, covered and stored in a fridge
 - avoid food that has been left uncovered, it may have been exposed to harmful bacteria and viruses
- avoid shellfish, it can be hazardous even if well cooked
- only consume pasteurised milk and milk products
 - unpasteurised milk should be boiled
- check the expiry date of food and drink before consuming



Travellers' diarrhoea

Travellers' Diarrhoea is common for all travellers during Hajj. The responsible bacteria and viruses are spread by food or water that has been accidentally contaminated with sewage, and may also be accidentally swallowed after touching contaminated surfaces. All travellers are at risk; however, people with underlying health problems can be at greater risk of becoming rapidly and dangerously dehydrated.

Preventing dehydration during an episode of travellers' diarrhoea is important:

- clear fluids such as diluted fruit juices or oral rehydration solutions, such as packets of oral rehydration salts sold in pharmacies, should be drunk liberally
- all rehydrating drinks must be prepared with safe water
- antibiotics are unnecessary in most cases

Seek medical attention if diarrhoea is severe, or there is blood or mucous in your poo, marked vomiting, fever or abdominal pain.

Reducing respiratory infections during Hajj

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ministry of Health recommends face-masks are used at crowded and congested places, especially during circumambulation of the Ka'ba (Tawaf), stoning (Rajm), and walking between Safa and Marwa (Sa'i).

- Face-masks should be changed in accordance with the guidelines provided by the manufacturer.
 - Wash your hands before putting on and after removing your face-mask.



You can reduce your risk of acquiring and spreading respiratory infections by:

- maintaining good hand hygiene
- avoiding direct hand contact with your eyes, nose and mouth
- covering your nose and mouth with disposable tissues when coughing or sneezing and disposing of them in nearest waste bin after use
- avoiding direct contact with persons with a respiratory illness and avoid using their personal items such as their mobile phone
- avoiding close contact with animals, particularly camels
 - avoiding drinking unpasteurised camel milk, camel urine, or eating undercooked camel meat



If you develop severe respiratory illness during travel you should:

- seek medical help early
- avoid crowds until symptoms have resolved, or wear a face-mask in crowded areas if avoidance is not possible:
 - ensure nose and mouth are covered with disposable tissues when coughing or sneezing, dispose of them appropriately and wash hands



Blood-borne virus transmission associated with shaving

Non-sterile blades can transmit blood-borne infections, such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C, and HIV. You are therefore advised to:

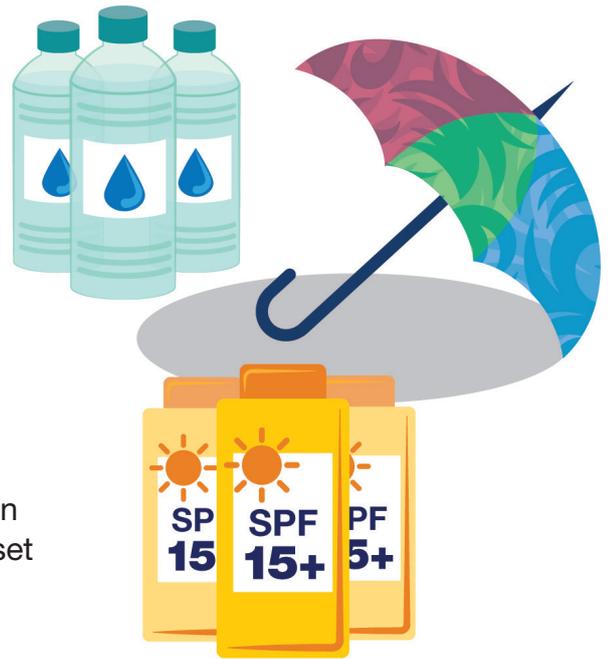
- use a licensed barber at officially designated centres
 - avoid street barbers
- ask the barber to wash their hands before shaving you
- check your barber is using a disposable single-use razor or ask them to use your personal razor
 - avoid all other kinds of razors, including the ones which have their blades changed after every shave



Climate related health risks

Even during the winter months, temperatures during the day in Saudi Arabia can reach 30°C. Sunburn, sunstroke, heat exhaustion, heat stroke and dehydration are a risk for everyone. Where possible arrive in time to allow acclimatisation to the hot conditions before undertaking Hajj. It is important to:

- rest when possible
- maintain good hydration with safe liquids
- seek shade where possible
 - umbrellas can be used to create shade
 - Saudi authorities have decreed that pilgrims can perform some rituals between sunrise and sunset to avoid high daytime temperatures
- use a sunscreen factor 15 or higher



Accidents and injuries

Accidents and injuries do occur during the Hajj pilgrimage. Traffic vehicle accidents are a potential hazard, pilgrims may walk long distances through or close to dense traffic and busy roads. Pilgrims with diabetes or poor circulation to the lower limbs must take particular care to look after their feet.

- Minor injuries to the feet are common, ensure you have good quality protective footwear.

It is strongly recommended that all travellers obtain comprehensive travel and medical insurance, including repatriation, before travel.

After the Hajj

Seek medical attention if you have a fever with respiratory symptoms or any other severe symptoms on return from Hajj. You should contact a doctor as soon as possible and ensure that you mention your travel history.

Further advice

- Saudi Arabia Ministry of Health: <https://www.moh.gov.sa/en/Hajj/Pages/default.aspx>
- fitfortravel: <https://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/hajj>