

Key aspects briefly summarized

- Only healthy people should go on the Hajj or Umrah pilgrimages.
- Routine vaccinations should be up to date; vaccination against meningococcal disease (A, C, W135, Y) is mandatory and vaccination against hepatitis A and B, polio, Covid-19 and influenza are recommended.
- Follow food, water, and hand hygiene rules and wear a mask in crowded places.

Pilgrimages are a very important aspect of many people's lives. However, as with all international mass gatherings, pilgrimages bear health risks and thus require preparation. The Hajj is physically exhausting, therefore a medical assessment is recommended for those suffering from chronic conditions. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia advises elderly and seriously ill people, pregnant women, and children to postpone or refrain from undertaking the Hajj and the Umrah.

Before departure

Check for updated health, vaccination and entry requirements and general recommendations on:

- Ministry of Health in Saudi Arabia (www.moh.gov.sa),
- Ministry of Hajj, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (www.hajjinformation.com), and
- The Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (www.saudiembassy.net/hajj-and-umrah-health-requirements).

Check for sufficient international insurance coverage.

Vaccinations (See [References](#))

- All pilgrims should be fully immunised for the routine vaccinations (diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, varicella) (see [Swiss vaccination schedule](#))
- **Meningococcal meningitis (A, C, W135, Y):** All adults and children >1 y **must** have received the conjugate quadrivalent (A,C,W135,Y) meningococcal vaccination within the last 5 years and not less than 10 days prior to arrival. Proof of **vaccination** on the basis of an international vaccination certificate is **mandatory** when entering Saudi Arabia.
- **Hepatitis A:** Vaccination against hepatitis A is recommended for all pilgrims and travelers.
- **Poliomyelitis:**
 - The following applies to persons travelling directly from Switzerland to Saudi Arabia: After completion of basic immunisation according to the [Swiss vaccination schedule](#), all pilgrims are recommended to receive booster vaccinations as follows:
 - Immunocompetent travellers <65 years: every 20 years
 - Immunocompetent travellers ≥65 years: every 10 years
 - Travellers with immunodeficiency: every 10 years
 - Persons travelling through a country where polio cases have been reported are required to provide proof of polio vaccination upon entry into Saudi Arabia: In this case, the inactivated polio vaccination (IPV) must have been administered within the last 12 months and at least 4 weeks prior to entry into Saudi Arabia. If no IPV vaccination is available, the oral polio vaccination (OPV) with at least one dose is accepted if it was administered within the last 6 months and at least 4 weeks prior to travelling to Saudi Arabia. In the absence of proof upon entry into Saudi Arabia, vaccination with an oral polio vaccine (OPV) will be given.
- **Hepatitis B:** Vaccination against hepatitis B is strongly recommended. The reason for this is, that Muslim men shave their heads after completing the Hajj pilgrimage. It is therefore essential that you take disposable razor blades with you and visit licensed barbers whose shops are clearly labelled as such in order to avoid infection with blood-borne pathogens (such as hepatitis B, C, HIV and others).
- **COVID-19:** According to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, all pilgrims ≥12 years of age are recommended to complete a vaccination against COVID-19 with a vaccine authorised in Saudi Arabia and receive a dose of the 2024 updated vaccine.
- **Influenza:** As crowding increases the risk for infection, vaccination is especially recommended for small children, pregnant women, elderly, and individuals with chronic health conditions.

- A **yellow fever vaccination** is **obligatory** when entering Saudi Arabia from countries or areas at risk of yellow fever (see Appendix 2 of the [KSA document](#)).
- For other vaccinations according to risk: see country page Saudi Arabia at www.healthytravel.ch.

Menstruation

As Muslim law prohibits menstruating women from performing tawaf, women might consider consulting their gynaecologist before the pilgrimage if they intend to postpone or avoid menstruation.

During the Hajj

- **Heat:** During the summer months, daytime temperatures can reach 50°C and cause heat-related illness. Avoid excessive sun exposure by using umbrellas and seeking shade, wear sunscreen and stay well hydrated.
- **Hygiene:** Ensure optimal food, water, and hand hygiene (wash hands with soap and disinfect, avoid raw and undercooked food, unpasteurised milk, or tap water). Practise respiratory hygiene (wear a mask, keep a distance from other pilgrims if possible) to reduce the risk of respiratory infections such as tuberculosis, COVID-19, MERS (Middle-East respiratory syndrome), and influenza.
- **Diarrhea:** Ensure prompt and adequate rehydration. Carry oral rehydration solution (ORS). In case of severe diarrhea or vomiting with inability to hydrate, seek medical care.
- **Rabies:** If bitten by an animal, wash the wound with soap, disinfect, and seek immediate medical care for post-exposure rabies prophylaxis.
- **Mosquitos:** Take measures to prevent mosquito bites, particularly during the day in order to prevent infections such as dengue.
- **MERS-CoV** is a viral infection that is present on the Arabic Peninsula. It can cause severe lung infection. The way it is transmitted is unclear, but it can occur between humans and likely with close contact to camels or camel products (e.g. milk). The following people are currently advised not to go on pilgrimage due to higher risk of MERS-CoV infection: persons >65 years, persons with chronic diseases (e.g. diabetes, immunodeficiency, cancer, heart, kidney or lung diseases), pregnant women, and children.
- **Medical Care:** Many medical facilities provide free healthcare for pilgrims. Alternatively, there are fee-charging private hospitals.

After the Hajj

Seek medical care if suffering from fever, respiratory or gastrointestinal symptoms, or any other health complaints following the pilgrimage.

References:

- Ministry of Health of Saudi Arabia: Health Requirements and Recommendations for Travelers to Saudi Arabia for Hajj – 1445H (2024): https://www.moh.gov.sa/HealthAwareness/Pilgrims_Health/Documents/Haji-Health-Requirements-English-language.pdf
- Ministry of Health of Saudi Arabia: Hajj Vaccinations 1445: Vaccinations for Pilgrims Coming from Outside the Kingdom: https://www.moh.gov.sa/en/HealthAwareness/Pilgrims_Health/Approved-Vaccines/Pages/Outside-the-Kingdom.aspx