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Hajj 1444H and Umrah update: 2023

Information for pilgrims planning to perform Hajj 1444H or Umrah in 2023

Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Makkah (Mecca) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is one of the largest gatherings of its kind in the world. Hajj 1444H (2023) is due to start on 26 June 2023 [1]. For 2023 the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah have announced that Hajj pilgrim numbers would return to pre-pandemic levels and without COVID-19 precautionary measures or older age restrictions [2].

Due to the large crowds, mass gatherings such as Hajj and Umrah are associated with unique health risks [3]. Each year, the [Ministry of Health \(MoH\) of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia \(KSA\)](#) issues the requirements and recommendations for entry visas relevant to pilgrims and seasonal workers who intend to visit KSA during forthcoming Hajj and Umrah season. Details of [the requirements and recommendations for Hajj 1444H, including required and recommended vaccinations, COVID-19 and general health advice are available from the Saudi Ministry of Health](#) [4]. Requirements and recommendations may differ from year to year.

Advice for travellers

Before you travel

Before making plans, you should check:

- Up to date information from the [Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office](#) for details on current guidance and travel restrictions for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- [UK border entry requirements](#).
- A comprehensive guide for applying to perform Hajj is available on the [Nusuk Hajj platform](#), produced by the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah.
- Details of [the requirements and recommendations for Hajj 1444H, including required and recommended vaccinations, COVID-19 and general health advice are available from the Saudi Ministry of Health](#) [4]. Requirements and recommendations may differ from year to year.
- Country-specific information can be found on our [Country Information pages](#).

COVID-19

[MoH KSA](#) states that in order to perform Hajj pilgrims must have proof that they have:

- received a full course of COVID-19 vaccinations (had the second dose of a two dose vaccine or received a single dose vaccine) approved by the Saudi Ministry of Health; see [Ministry of Health Approved Vaccines](#).
- There is no longer a requirement for PCR testing in order to perform Hajj or to enter KSA.

Advice on providing proof of vaccination is not specified, but pilgrims should be prepared to provide evidence, as with other vaccinations [1].

Meningococcal disease

All travellers aged over one year, arriving for Umrah, Hajj or for seasonal work in Hajj zones, are required to submit a valid vaccination certificate with a quadrivalent (ACWY) meningococcal vaccine received at least 10 days prior to the planned arrival to Hajj and Umrah areas [4].

This vaccine is also recommended for personal protection against groups A, C, W and Y meningococcal disease (see also recommended vaccines).

Vaccination with ONE of the following vaccines is acceptable:

- Quadrivalent (ACWY) polysaccharide vaccine within the last three years.
- Quadrivalent (ACWY) conjugate vaccine within the last five years.

If the vaccine type is not indicated on the certificate, it will be considered valid for three years [4].

Polio

[MoH KSA](#) states that travellers regardless of age or vaccination status from countries reporting cases of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) or circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 1 (cVDPV1) are required to submit a polio vaccination certificate with at least one dose of bivalent oral polio vaccine (bOPV) or inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) within the previous 12 months and not less than four weeks prior to arrival[4, 5].

Travellers from countries reporting cases of circulating vaccine derived poliovirus type 2 (cVDPV2) or Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP), are required to be vaccinated with at least one dose of IPV within the previous 12 months and administered not less than four weeks prior to arrival.

Travellers from countries reporting positive environmental sources samples of circulating vaccine derived polio virus 2 (cVDPV2), **including the UK**, are recommended to be vaccinated with at least one dose of IPV within the previous 12 months and at least four weeks prior to arrival, however there is no polio vaccination certificate requirement [4].

A polio certificate requirement will only apply to UK pilgrims if they are travelling to KSA via a country reporting WPV1, cVDPV1 or cases of cVDPV2 or Acute Flaccid Paralysis, and not if they are travelling directly to KSA from the UK.

See Appendix 1: Tables 1, 2 and 3 in [Health Requirements and Recommendations for Travelers to Saudi Arabia for Hajj - 1444h \(2023\)](#) for country details.

Yellow fever

All travellers above nine months of age visiting KSA for Hajj and Umrah arriving from countries or areas at risk for transmission of yellow fever (YF) as stated in [Appendix 2 Health Requirements and Recommendations for Travellers to Saudi Arabia for Hajj and Umrah - 1444H \(2023\)](#), must present a valid International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis documenting yellow fever (YF) vaccination [4, 5].

There is no risk of YF in the UK (or in KSA). Therefore, this YF certificate requirement will only apply to UK pilgrims if they are travelling to KSA via a YF risk country and not if they are travelling directly to KSA from the UK.

General vaccination advice for KSA can be found on our [Country Information page](#).

All pilgrims should ensure that they are up to date with routine immunisations including COVID-19, [measles, mumps and rubella \(MMR\)](#) and diphtheria-tetanus-polio vaccine [6]. Pilgrims in [clinical risk](#)

[groups](#) should receive [influenza vaccine](#) annually from their usual healthcare provider [7]. Those who do not fall into any of these risk groups can still pay and be vaccinated at some high street pharmacies, other retailers, or private travel clinics, but a vaccine may not be available in the UK summer months.

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) official social media channel [@ukinsaudi Arabia](#), and the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah social media channel [@MoHU_En](#) also provide information and guidance. Pilgrims can also sign up for [FCDO email updates](#).

While you are away

Take care with eating and drinking and [follow basic hygiene rules](#). Be prepared to manage [travellers' diarrhoea](#), ensure that you drink plenty of fluids and if you have diarrhoea with blood and/or fever see a doctor straight away.

Remember to take care in the sun keep cool, seek shade, drink plenty of water and use [sun protection](#).

[Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus \(MERS-CoV\)](#) can cause severe illness and death. It was first identified in KSA in 2012; most cases to date have occurred in the Arabian Peninsula and in particular in KSA. To reduce the risk of MERS-CoV, avoid close contact with camels and contact with sick animals. You should also avoid drinking raw milk or eating raw meat or animal products that have not been thoroughly cooked, particularly camel based foods.

MoH KSA also recommends pilgrims :

- Wash hands with soap and water or an alcohol based hand sanitiser, especially after coughing and sneezing, after using toilets, before handling and consuming food, and after touching animals.
- Use disposable tissues when coughing or sneezing and dispose of used tissues in a wastebasket.
- Wear a face mask in crowded places.
- Avoid close contact with people who appear ill and avoid sharing their personal belongings.

UKHSA provides further [guidance for travellers to, and returning from the Middle East](#), alongside more detailed [information for health professionals](#).

[Dengue](#) is spread by day-biting mosquitoes and [malaria](#) by mosquitoes that are active at night. Reduce your risk of insect bites day and night by using effective insect repellents, protective clothing and sleep under a mosquito net, impregnated with insecticide. See our [insect and tick bite avoidance factsheet](#) for further advice.

[Rabies](#) is a fatal virus spread by contact with saliva from an infected animal is a risk in many countries in this region. Dogs are responsible for most of the human cases worldwide, but all animals can carry rabies. Be aware of the risk, and know what to do if you are bitten, licked on an open wound or scratched.

If you test positive for COVID-19 while abroad you will need to follow local public health advice.. You may need to self-isolate in the country you are in, so you may need to stay longer than planned. Plan ahead for any possible delays to your return home. Once you have fully recovered, check with your local health provider if you are fit to travel, before any onward travel.

When you return

If you become ill in the weeks/months following your trip, particularly with fever, flu-like symptoms, rash and/or diarrhoea, get immediate medical help. Remember to tell your doctor you travelled abroad. You should also inform your doctor if you have been in contact with camels, consumed camel products, been in contact with or cared for anyone with respiratory symptoms, visited or been admitted to or worked in a healthcare facility.

Advice for health professionals

Health professionals advising those who plan to travel, can check our [Country Information pages](#) for vaccine recommendations and specific risk advice.

Health professionals should consider the possibility of a travel-related illness in those presenting with a fever or flu-like illness. If a travel-related infection is suspected, this should be discussed urgently with your local microbiology, virology or infectious diseases consultant, giving a full travel/clinical history. They may advise that appropriate samples are sent for testing to [specialist laboratory facilities](#) in the UK.

Resources

- [Country Information](#)
- [Hajj and Umrah factsheet](#)
- [The Council of British Hajjis](#)

References

1. [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Foreign travel advice. Saudi Arabia. \[Accessed 4 May 2023\]](#)
2. [The Council of British Muslims \(CBHUK\). Hajj 2023 - Guidance for British pilgrims. 2 February 2023. \[Accessed 4 May 2023\]](#)
3. [Aldossari M, Aljoudi A & Celantano D. Health issues at the Hajj pilgrimage: a literature review. EMHJ, Vol 25, No. 10, 2019 \[Accessed 4 May 2023\]](#)
4. [Ministry of Health, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Health requirements and Recommendations for Travelers to Saudi Arabia for Hajj - 1444h \(2023\). \[Accessed 4 May 2023\]](#)
5. [World Health Organization. Vaccination requirements and recommendations for international travellers; and malaria situation per country - 2022 edition. \[Accessed 4 May 2023\]](#)
6. [UK Health Security Agency. UK immunisation schedule Chapter 11. Immunisation against infectious disease. Update 17 March 2022. \[Accessed 4 May 2023\]](#)
7. [UK Health Security Agency. Influenza Chapter 19. Immunisation against infectious disease. Update 21 September 2022. \[Accessed 4 May 2023\]](#)