

MINISTRY OF HEALTH (SINGAPORE)
Health advisory for Haj and Umrah pilgrims
(April 2023)

The Ministry of Health (MOH) advises Haj and Umrah pilgrims to take the following preventive measures when travelling to the Middle East region.

PRE-TRAVEL PREPARATIONS

- Consult your healthcare provider prior to travel.
- Check on vaccination requirements and take all required vaccines.
- Be up-to-date with vaccinations in the National Adult Immunisation Schedule (NAIS) or National Childhood Immunisation Schedule (NCIS).
- Be aware of the situation in countries you intend to travel to.

VACCINATION REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Haj and Umrah pilgrims are required to receive the COVID-19 and meningococcal vaccinations prior to travel^{1,2}. Pilgrims are also recommended to be up-to-date with vaccinations in the NAIS or NCIS.

Vaccine	Vaccination details
	<i>Requirement</i>
COVID-19 vaccine	Visa requirement for pilgrims ^{1,2} . COVID-19 vaccination is free for all Singaporeans and long-term residents in Singapore. The vaccination is especially important for the elderly and other vulnerable groups (e.g. pregnant women, persons with comorbidities) as they are at high risk of severe disease. For more information on COVID-19 vaccination, please visit https://www.moh.gov.sg/covid-19/vaccination/faqs .
Meningococcal vaccine	Visa requirement for pilgrims aged one year and older ^{1,3} . As required by the Ministry of Health Saudi Arabia, vaccination must be completed at least 10 days prior to travel. The validity of the vaccination varies depending on the type of vaccine received: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Quadrivalent meningococcal (ACWY) conjugate vaccine: valid for 5 years.- Quadrivalent meningococcal (ACWY) polysaccharide vaccine: valid for 3 years (Meningococcal polysaccharide vaccines are no longer registered in Singapore).

¹ Please visit Ministry of Health Saudi Arabia's website for details on the prevailing requirements for Haj: https://www.moh.gov.sa/en/HealthAwareness/Pilgrims_Health/Documents/Health-Regulations-En.pdf

² Please visit MFA's website for details on the prevailing requirements for entry into Saudi Arabia: <https://www.mfa.gov.sg/countries-regions/s/saudi-arabia/travel-page>

³ Meningococcal conjugate vaccine can be administered in children as early as 6 weeks of age. Please approach your doctor for advice on the type of meningococcal conjugate vaccines that are suitable for children below one year of age.

<i>Recommended</i>	
Influenza vaccine	Recommended in the NAIS and NCIS for children aged 6 months to below 5 years, adults aged 65 years and older, and persons aged 5 to 64 years with certain medical conditions or indications. All other pilgrims may also consider getting the influenza vaccination prior to travel.
Pneumococcal vaccine	Recommended in the NAIS and NCIS for children below 5 years of age, adults aged 65 years and older, and persons aged 5 to 64 years with certain medical conditions.
Routine vaccines	Other nationally recommended vaccinations include <u>measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) and varicella</u> vaccinations (for children and adults), and <u>diphtheria and polio</u> vaccinations (for children).
Subsidies are available for eligible Singaporeans for nationally recommended vaccinations. Please consult your doctor for further advice regarding the above vaccinations or on other travel-related vaccinations prior to travel.	
For more information on nationally recommended vaccinations, please visit the HealthHub at: https://www.healthhub.sg/programmes/163/vaccinate	

GENERAL HEALTH ADVICE

- Pilgrims with pre-existing major medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, chronic lung disease, chronic renal disease, immunodeficiency) should consult a doctor before travelling to assess whether making the pilgrimage is medically advisable.
- Observe good personal hygiene at all times.
- Practise frequent hand washing (e.g. before handling food or eating, after going to toilet, or when hands are soiled).
- Adopt good food safety and hygiene practices and avoid consuming raw and unpasteurised milk, undercooked meats, or food prepared under unsanitary conditions, and properly washing fruits and vegetables before eating them.
- Avoid close contact with persons who are unwell, such as those suffering from respiratory infections.
- Avoid contact with camels and other animals, including not visiting camel farms. If contact has been made, thoroughly wash hands with soap.
- Avoid visiting healthcare institutions in the Middle East unless it is necessary to do so as part of accessing medical care.
- Pilgrims are advised to wear masks (i.e. surgical masks) especially when in crowded places.
- Wear a surgical mask and seek medical attention promptly if you become unwell while travelling or within 2 weeks after returning to Singapore, and inform the doctor of your travel history.

OTHER HEALTH ALERT(S)

Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS)

Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) is viral illness caused by the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV). Since 2012, the World Health Organization (WHO) has recorded more than 2600 cases of MERS-CoV infection in 27

countries, mainly in the Middle East region⁴. Majority of the cases were reported in Saudi Arabia, with recent cases in 2022 reported in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Oman.

Symptoms of MERS-CoV infection include fever, cough and shortness of breath. MERS-CoV infection may result in severe illness and complications, such as pneumonia, and death occurs in about a third of infected individuals. The virus is present in infected dromedary camels, and can spread to humans through contact with infected animals or contaminated animal products. It may also spread through close contact with infected persons.

For the latest update on the Health Advisory, please refer to [https://www.moh.gov.sg/diseases-updates/novel-coronavirus-infection-\(mers-cov\)](https://www.moh.gov.sg/diseases-updates/novel-coronavirus-infection-(mers-cov))

⁴ For the latest update, please refer to WHO's website at: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/middle-east-respiratory-syndrome-coronavirus-mers>