

# Advice for travelling to Hajj and Umrah

## Before travelling

- Check the 'Entry requirements' section of the [GOV.UK foreign travel advice](#) for Saudi Arabia for the rules you will need to follow during Hajj and Umrah.
- Follow the visa and vaccination requirements issued by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ministry of Health, [Pilgrim's health](#).
- Book a travel health risk assessment before you travel for tailored advice if you think you may need vaccines or boosters.
- Get travel insurance.

## During Hajj or Umrah

### Hand washing

Regularly washing your hands is one of the most important ways to protect yourself and others from illnesses caused by germs (such as bacteria and viruses) that enter our bodies through our eyes, nose or mouth.

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

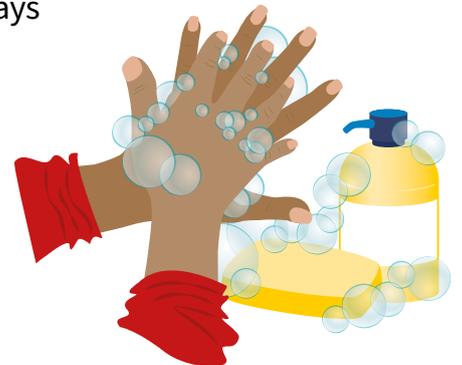
- when your hands are visibly dirty

#### before

- preparing food
- eating food and drinking
- touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- treating a cut or wound or caring for someone who is unwell

#### after

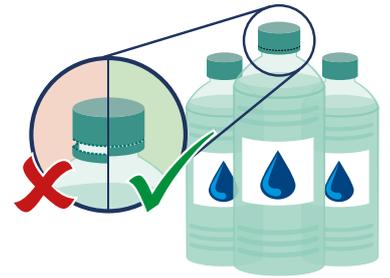
- using the toilet or cleaning up bodily fluids
- blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- adjusting or removing a face mask
- touching food, household waste and other commonly touched items such as handrails
- using public transport



## Water precautions

Water may contain germs or harmful chemicals:

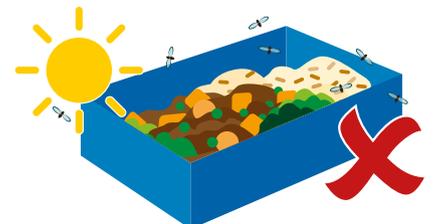
- Only consume water if you know it's **safe to drink**.
- This also applies to water used for making ice cubes and cleaning teeth.
- Always check the seals are intact on bottled water before use.



## Food precautions

Harmful germs that cause food poisoning can form quickly in food if it has been inappropriately prepared, undercooked or stored incorrectly. Reduce your risk of food poisoning by:

- washing your hands and cooking utensils thoroughly and cleaning food preparation surfaces, and:
  - wash fruit and vegetables in safe water before use, and peel if to be eaten raw
  - avoid salads and fresh herbs (including the garnishes in drinks).
- ensuring meat, rice and vegetables are properly cooked, served very hot and ideally eaten immediately:
  - unused cooked food should be quickly cooled, covered and stored in a fridge
  - avoid food that has been left uncovered – it may have been exposed to harmful germs
  - avoid shellfish – it can be risky even if well cooked.
- only consuming pasteurised milk and dairy products.
- avoiding consuming food and drink that has passed the expiry date.



## Travellers' diarrhoea

Travellers' diarrhoea is common during Hajj and Umrah, and can be caused by eating and drinking food and water that has germs in it, poor hand washing or by using unclean dishes and cutlery. People with underlying health problems are at greater risk of complications if they get travellers' diarrhoea.

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

- You should drink plenty of clear fluids such as water, diluted fruit juices or oral rehydration salt solutions, such as Dioralyte®.
- All rehydrating drinks must be prepared using **safe water**.

**Get medical attention if your diarrhoea is severe (more than six times in 24 hours); there is blood or mucous (slime) in your poo; or you keep vomiting, have a fever or severe tummy pain.**

## Reducing respiratory infections during Hajj and Umrah

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Ministry of Health recommends wearing a face mask while performing rituals, when you're in crowded places or if you're ill.

Using a face mask may reduce your risk of catching and spreading respiratory infections. You should change your face mask regularly, according to the manufacturer's instructions, and wash your hands before putting on, touching and after removing your face mask.



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

- avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- covering your nose and mouth with a disposable tissue when coughing or sneezing, and putting the used tissue in nearest waste bin immediately after use
- regularly cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched items such as personal items, passport and mobile phone



- avoiding close contact with anyone who has a respiratory illness and avoid sharing their personal items such as towels or mobile phones
- avoiding close contact with animals, particularly camels:
  - avoid drinking raw camel milk or urine, or eating undercooked camel meat or camel products.

If you get a new respiratory illness during travel you should:

- seek medical help early, particularly if you feel unwell, have a fever or your symptoms are severe
- avoid contact with others or wear a mask until your symptoms have gone.



## Diseases spread by insect bites

It's important to try and protect yourself from being bitten by mosquitoes and other insects, as they can spread diseases such as dengue fever.

You can do this by:

- wearing long loose-fitting clothing to protect your skin from bites
- applying a good-quality insect repellent (such as one that contains 50% DEET) to all skin not covered by clothing
- reducing the number of mosquitoes in and around your accommodation by using insect screens or nets, and closing doors and windows.



## Blood-borne virus transmission associated with shaving

Used razor blades can transmit viruses such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). To lower your risk, you should:

- avoid sharing personal razors or shaving blades with other people:
  - only use officially licensed barbers at designated centres and avoid street barbers
- ask the barber to wash their hands before shaving you
- check the barber is using a new disposable single-use razor or ask them to use your personal razor
- avoid all other kinds of razors, including the ones when the blade is changed after every shave
- dispose of razor blades safely after use in safety containers for sharps.



## Climate-related health risks

Temperatures can be greater than 30°C during the day in Saudi Arabia during the winter and 50°C in the summer months. This can cause sunburn, sunstroke, heat exhaustion, heat stroke and/or dehydration. Be aware temperatures can fall at night, particularly during winter months. Arriving in the country a few days early allows time to get used to the heat before undertaking Hajj or Umrah.

To avoid high daytime temperatures, you may be able to perform some rituals in the evening.

It's important to:

- seek shade where possible (umbrellas can be used to create shade)
- rest whenever possible
- keep well hydrated using safe drinks
- use a sunscreen factor 30 or higher
- bring warm bedding/clothing for nighttime.



## Accidents and injuries

Accidents and injuries such as slips, falls, stampedes and road accidents are common during Hajj due to millions of pilgrims moving from one place to another at the same time.

You're strongly recommended to buy travel insurance that covers your trip.

To protect yourself, consider:

- taking extra care when walking alongside busy roads or close to heavy traffic
- wearing comfortable, good-quality protective footwear when walking to avoid injuring your feet, particularly if you have a condition causing poor circulation.

## After Hajj and Umrah

If you have flu-like symptoms, including fever, cough and/or shortness of breath within 14 days of returning from Saudi Arabia, call your GP by phone or call NHS 24 on 111 (out of hours) as soon as possible and make sure that you mention your recent travel. These symptoms may be caused by respiratory infections, including **Middle East Respiratory Syndrome** (MERS-CoV).

You should phone your GP practice first to reduce the risk of spreading the infection to others.



## Further advice

Saudi Arabia Ministry of Health

- [www.moh.gov.sa/en/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.moh.gov.sa/en/Pages/default.aspx)

fitfortravel

- [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/advice/general-travel-health-advice/hajj-and-umrah-pilgrimage](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/advice/general-travel-health-advice/hajj-and-umrah-pilgrimage)