

Health Requirements and Recommendations for Travelers to Saudi Arabia for Umrah – 1444H (2023)

Millions of Muslims travel to Saudi Arabia to do the (Umrah) pilgrimage. The number of people who do Umrah is spread out over the lunar year and is steadily going up. The extreme congestion amplifies health risks, such as those from infectious diseases, that vary each year. The Ministry of Health in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia issues this document to provide health advice for foreign visitors going on Umrah 1444H (2023).

1 Vaccinations

It is highly recommended that people who are going on Umrah get all the vaccines that are due in their country. Generally, this includes vaccination against Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, Polio, Measles, Varicella, and Mumps.

Travelers coming from certain countries are required to provide proof of vaccination as follows:

1.1 Meningococcal meningitis

- To reduce the risk of meningococcal meningitis outbreaks, all travelers for Umrah who are older than 1 year, should get a quadrivalent (ACYW) meningococcal vaccine at least 10 days before their planned arrival to Umrah zone.
- Vaccination with ONE of the following vaccines is acceptable:
 - Quadrivalent (ACYW) polysaccharide vaccine within the last 3 years.
 - Quadrivalent (ACYW) conjugate vaccine within the last 5 years.

1.2 Poliomyelitis

- Travelers from states reporting cases of WPV1 or cVDPV1 (Appendix 1-Table 1) 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 4 weeks before arrival.
- Travelers from states with cVDPV2 positive samples from human sources or acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) cases (Appendix 1-Table 2) must show a valid polio vaccination certificate with at least one dose of IPV within the previous 12 months and at least 4 weeks prior to arrival. If IPV is not available, it is recommended to be vaccinated with at least one dose of oral polio vaccine (OPV) within the previous 6 months and not less than 4 weeks prior to arrival.
- Travelers from states where cVDPV2 was found in the environment (Appendix 1-Table 2) should get at least one dose of IPV within the last 6 months and get it at least 4 weeks before they arrive. If IPV is not available, it is recommended to be vaccinated with at least one dose of the oral polio vaccine (OPV) within the previous 6 months and administered not less than 4 weeks prior to arrival.

1.3 Yellow Fever

- All travelers older than 9 months who come from a state with risk of yellow fever transmission (Appendix 2) must show proof that they have been vaccinated against yellow fever. The Yellow Fever vaccination certificate is valid for life starting 10 days after vaccination.

In addition, the following vaccines are specifically recommended for Umrah pilgrims:

1.4 Coronavirus (COVID-19)

All travelers for Umrah are recommended to complete their vaccinations with approved vaccines. Additional information can be found in this link:

https://www.moh.gov.sa/en/HealthAwareness/Pilgrims_Health/Approved-Vaccines/Pages/Outside-the-Kingdom.aspx

1.5 Seasonal Influenza

Travelers arriving for Umrah are recommended to get the most recent seasonal influenza vaccine. Influenza vaccination is especially important for pregnant women, children under 5 years, people over 65 years, people with chronic medical conditions (such as chronic heart, lung, kidney, metabolic, neurodevelopmental, liver or blood diseases) and people with weakened immune systems (such as people receiving chemotherapy or steroids, or people with active cancer).

2 Preventive measures by health authority at points of entry

All travelers arriving to Saudi Arabia are required to adhere to Public Health Authority's safety regulations, which can be found online at <https://covid19.cdc.gov.sa/>.

If deemed necessary, the Ministry of Health may administer prophylactic antibiotics at entry points to certain travelers arriving from countries with frequent epidemics of meningococcal meningitis, countries at risk for meningitis epidemics, and countries with outbreaks of non-vaccine groups of *Neisseria meningitidis* (Appendix 3).

Travelers from states which report cases of WPV1 or cVDPV1 (Appendix 1-Table 1) will receive one dose of bOPV at points on entry to Saudi Arabia, regardless of age and vaccination status.

Aircrafts, ships and other means of transportation arriving from countries affected by yellow fever (Appendix 2) or from countries affected with the Zika virus and/or dengue fever (Appendix 4) must display a valid certificate that disinsection followed WHO recommendation.

3 General health recommendations

The Ministry of Health recommends that the health and physical ability of Umrah applicants be checked by authorities in their home countries. Older people and those who have severe chronic diseases like advanced cancer, heart and lung diseases, advanced liver or kidney diseases, or senility are especially at risk.

People are susceptible to respiratory infections at mass gatherings such as Umrah. During rituals, pilgrims should always wear a clean, dry mask that fits well and wash their hands often.

Even with food safety inspection and monitoring at Umrah facilities, the pilgrim's role is to make sure food is handled safely. Common reasons for contamination include raw food cross-contamination and improper cooking and storage temperatures. Single-use, precooked meals are safe and readily accessible at Umrah facilities.

Pilgrims, especially older individuals, are advised to avoid direct sun exposure while performing rituals and to drink adequate fluids. Physicians may need to adjust medications that can exacerbate dehydration (e.g., diuretics) or interfere with heat exchange.

4 Responding to International Health Events

In the case of a public health emergency of international concern, or in the case of any event subject to notification under the International Health Regulations (2005), the Ministry of Health will undertake all additional necessary measures in consultation with the WHO.

Appendix 1:

Table 1: States reporting cases of WPV1 or cVDPV1

WP1	cVDPV1
Afghanistan	Madagascar
Mozambique	Mozambique
Pakistan	Malawi
	DR Congo
	Yemen
	Congo

Table 2: States reporting cases of cVDPV2 positive human sources samples or acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) cases or positive environmental sources samples

Positive human samples OR acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) cases		Positive environmental sources samples
Algeria	Somalia	United Kingdom
Ethiopia	Ghana	Botswana
Nigeria	Central African Rep	Canada
Mali	Niger	Zambia
Chad	Mozambique	Côte d'Ivoire
Benin	Sudan	Egypt
Yemen	Togo	Palestine
DR Congo	United states of America	Djibouti
Cameroon	Indonesia	

Appendix 2:

Countries/areas at risk of Yellow Fever transmission, as per the WHO International Travel and Health guidelines, are:

Africa		Americas
Angola	Ghana	Argentina
Benin	Guinea	Venezuela
Burkina Faso	Guinea-Bissau	Bolivia
Burundi	Kenya	Brazil
Cameroon	Liberia	Colombia
Central African Republic	Mali	Trinidad and Tobago
Chad	Mauritania	French Guiana
Congo	Niger	Guyana
Côte d'Ivoire	Nigeria	Panama
DR Congo	Senegal	Paraguay
Equatorial Guinea	Sierra Leone	Peru
Ethiopia	Sudan	Surinam
Gabon	Gambia	Ecuador
South Sudan	Togo	
	Uganda	

Appendix 3:

Countries/areas with frequent epidemics of meningococcal meningitis and countries at risk for meningitis epidemics (WHO International Travel and Health, 2015):

Benin	Guinea-Bissau
Burkina Faso	Kenya
Burundi	Mali
Cameroon	Mauritania
Central African Republic	Niger
Chad	Nigeria
Côte d'Ivoire	South Sudan
DR Congo	Rwanda
Eritrea	Senegal
Ethiopia	Sudan
Gambia	Tanzania
Ghana	Togo
Guinea	Uganda

Appendix 4:

Countries with current or previous Zika virus transmission:

Americas		Asia	Africa
Anguilla	Dominica	Bangladesh	Angola
Antigua and Barbuda	Dominican Republic	India	Burkina Faso
Argentina	Ecuador	Indonesia	Burundi
Europa	El Salvador	Maldives	Cabo Verde
AL Bahama	French Guiana	Myanmar	Cameroon
Barbados	Grenada	Thailand	Central African Republic
Belize	Guadeloupe	Cambodia	Côte d'Ivoire
Bolivia	Guatemala	Cook Islands	Ethiopia
Bonaire	Guyana	Fiji	Gabon
Sint Eustatius and Saba	Haiti	French Polynesia	Guinea Bissau
Brazil	Honduras	Laos	Nigeria
British Virgin Islands	Isla de Pasqua - Chelsea	Marshall Islands	Senegal
Caiman Islands	Jamaica	Malaysia	Uganda
Colombia	Martinique	Micronesia	
Costa Rica	Mexico	New Caledonia	
Cuba	Montserrat	Palau	
Curaçao	Nicaragua	Vietnam	
Panama	Saint Vincent and the Grindins	Papua New Guinea	
Paraguay	Saint Martin	Philippines	
Peru	Suriname	Samoa	
Puerto Rico	Trinidad and Tobago	Singapore	
Saint Barthelemy	Turks and Caicos	Solomon Islands	
Saint Kitts and Nevis	US Virgin Islands	Tonga	
Saint Lucia	Venezuela	Vanuatu	
Saint Martin			