



ELSEVIER

<http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jiph>

EDITORIAL

Health conditions for travellers to Saudi Arabia for the pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj) 1432 (2011)[☆]

This publication is to inform visitors of the full requirements for entry into Saudi Arabia. The Ministry of Health of Saudi Arabia has issued the following requirements and recommendations for entry visas for the Hajj and Umra seasons in 2011

Yellow Fever

a) In accordance with the International Health Regulations 2005 [1], all travellers arriving from countries or areas at risk of yellow fever (listed below) must present a valid yellow fever vaccination certificate showing that the person was vaccinated at least 10 days previously and not more than 10 years before arrival at the border.

In the absence of such a certificate, the individual will be placed under strict surveillance for 6 days from the date of vaccination or the last date of potential exposure to infection, whichever is earlier. Health offices at entry points will be responsible for notifying the appropriate Director General of Health Affairs in the region or governorate about the temporary place of residence of the visitor.

The following countries/areas are at risk of yellow fever transmission (as defined by the International travel and health 2011 [2])

Africa:

Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mau-

ritania, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Togo and Uganda

South and Central America:

Argentina, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Plurinational State of Bolivia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago

b) Aircrafts, ships and other means of transportation coming from countries affected by yellow fever are requested to submit a certificate indicating that it applied disinsection in accordance with methods recommended by WHO.

In accordance with the International Health Regulations 2005, all arriving ships will be requested to provide to the competent authority a valid Ship Sanitation Certificate. Ships arriving from areas at risk for yellow fever transmission may also be required to submit to inspection to ensure they are free of yellow fever vectors, or disinfected, as a condition of granting free pratique (including permission to enter a port, to embark or disembark and to discharge or load cargo or stores).

Meningococcal Meningitis

a) Visitors from all countries:

Visitors arriving for the purpose of Umra or pilgrimage or for seasonal work are required to produce a certificate of vaccination with the quadrivalent (ACYW135) vaccine against meningitis issued not more than 3 years previously and not less than 10 days before arrival in Saudi Arabia. The responsible authorities in the visitor's country of origin should ensure that adults and children over the age of 2 years are given 1 dose of the quadrivalent polysaccharide (ACYW135) vaccine.

[☆] This report will appear in WHO publication *WER*, issue no. 39, Volume 86, scheduled for release 23 September 2011.

b) Visitors from African Countries

For Visitors arriving from countries in the African meningitis belt, namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sudan, in addition to the above stated requirements, ciprofloxacin tablets (500 mg) chemoprophylaxis will be administered at port of entry to lower the rate of carriers.

c) Interior pilgrims and the Hajj

And the Hajj workers Vaccination with quadrivalent (ACYW135) vaccine is required for:

- all citizens and residents of Medina and Mecca who have not been vaccinated during the past 3 years;
- all citizens and residents undertaking the Hajj;
- all Hajj workers who have not been vaccinated in the past 3 years;
- any individual working at entry points or in direct contact with pilgrims in Saudi Arabia.

Poliomyelitis

All travellers arriving from polio-endemic countries and re-established transmission countries, namely, Afghanistan, Angola, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Nigeria, Pakistan and Sudan, regardless of age and vaccination status, should receive 1 dose of OPV. Proof of OPV vaccination at least 6 weeks prior departure is required to apply for entry visa for Saudi Arabia. These travellers will also receive 1 dose of OPV at borders points on arrival in Saudi Arabia.

All visitors age under 15 years travelling to Saudi Arabia from countries with imported cases of poliomyelitis in the past 12 months (see list below) should be vaccinated against poliomyelitis with the oral polio vaccine (OPV). Proof of OPV vaccination is required 6 weeks prior the application for entry visa. Irrespective of previous immunization history, all visitors under 15 years arriving in Saudi Arabia will also receive a dose of OPV at border points.

The following are countries with imported cases in the past 12 months: Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Congo, Gabon, Guinea, Kazakhstan, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Nepal, Niger, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uganda.

Seasonal Influenza

The Ministry of Health of Saudi Arabia recommends that international pilgrims be vaccinated against

seasonal influenza before arrival into the kingdom of Saudi Arabia with WHO approved strains specific to the northern or southern hemispheres, particularly those with preexisting conditions (e.g. the elderly over 65 years of age, people with neurological diseases, chronic respiratory or heart diseases or cardiac, hepatic or renal failure, diabetes), obesity, immunodeficiency (e.g. due to HIV or cancer treatment), metabolic diseases and pregnant women.

In Saudi Arabia, seasonal influenza vaccine is recommended for internal pilgrims, particularly those with pre-existing health conditions, and all staff working in the Hajj premises.

Health Education

Health authorities in countries of origin are required to provide information to pilgrims on infectious diseases symptoms, methods of transmission, complications, and means of prevention.

Food

Hajj and Umrah performers are not allowed to bring fresh food in Saudi Arabia. Only properly canned or sealed food or food stored in containers with easy access for inspection is allowed in small quantities, sufficient for one person for the duration of his or her trip.

International Outbreaks Responses

Updating immunization against vaccine-preventable diseases in all travellers is strongly recommended. With the recent resurgence of measles and rubella cases, special attention is needed for both of these vaccines to avoid widespread outbreaks with this virus during this year Hajj and Umrah. Preparation for international travel provides opportunity to review the immunization status of travellers. Incompletely immunized travellers can be offered routine vaccinations recommended in national immunization schedules (these usually include diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, measles, and mumps), in addition to those needed for the specific travel (e.g. meningococcal vaccination for Hajj). In *International Travel and Health 2011* WHO recommends that travellers ensure immunity against measles by having at least 2 doses of vaccine and against rubella by one dose of vaccine.

In the event of a public health emergency of international health concern, or in the case of any disease outbreak subject to notification under the International Health Regulations 2005, the health authorities in Saudi Arabia will undertake additional preventive precautions (not included in the measures mentioned above) following consultation with WHO as necessary to avoid the spread of infection during the pilgrimage or on return to their country of origin.

Please address any queries to the Assistant Deputy Minister of Health for Preventive Medicine in Saudi Arabia.

References

- [1] International Health Regulations 2005. Geneva, WHO, 2005 (available at <http://www.who.int/ihr>).
- [2] International travel and health. Geneva, WHO, 2011 (available at <http://www.who.int/ith>).

Ziad A. Memish*
Abdullah A. Al Rabeeah
*Saudi Ministry of Health, Riyadh,
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: zmemish@yahoo.com

(Z.A. Memish)

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

