

Health requirements for pilgrims attending the Hajj in Mecca, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 24–29 October 2012

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Hajj is the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The 2012 Hajj is expected to gather over two million Muslims from more than 180 countries across the globe between 24 and 29 October and is by far the largest mass gathering in the world. With the Hajj approaching, the Ministry of Health of Saudi Arabia has issued information in Arabic and English about health requirements and recommendations on its website [1].

A publication in the *Weekly Epidemiological Record* informs visitors in English and French of the full requirements for entry into Saudi Arabia and information is also available in English from The National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) website [2,3].

Special requirements for visitors to the Hajj concern vaccinations against meningococcal meningitis, polio and yellow fever.

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. In an attempt to prevent the spread of foodborne infections Hajj performers are not allowed to bring fresh food to 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.

The KSA provides free healthcare to all visiting pilgrims during the Hajj, with the KSA Ministry of Health as one of the main contributors.

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