

Hajj pilgrims urged to be mindful of MERS-CoV advice

News story

UKHSA is reminding Hajj pilgrims to be aware of the risk of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



The risk of infection to UK residents travelling to the Middle East remains very low – the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), the National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) do not currently advise any travel restrictions to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in relation to Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV).

We urge pilgrims returning from Hajj and Umrah to look out for these symptoms:

- fever
- coughing
- shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

If individuals experience these symptoms within 14 days of leaving the KSA, they should call their GP immediately or NHS 111 and mention their travel history.

Camels can be a source of infection, so avoiding contact with them as well as not consuming any camel products will help you from contracting MERS-CoV.

MERS-CoV can also spread person-to-person if there is close contact, so it is important to practise good hand and respiratory hygiene – this includes covering your mouth when coughing or sneezing and washing your hands with soap and water regularly.

Dr Gavin Dabrera, lead for MERS-CoV at UKHSA, said:

We strongly advise travellers to avoid contact with camels and consumption of camel products in the KSA and to practise good hand

hygiene.

Pilgrims returning from Hajj and Umrah with symptoms of fever and cough or shortness of breath within 14 days of leaving the KSA, should call their GP immediately or NHS 111 and report their travel.

Dr Dipti Patel, director of NaTHNaC, said:

Our [information sheet for pilgrims](#) includes information on health regulations, vaccine requirements and recommendations and other general health advice for those planning to travel for Hajj and Umrah.

Pilgrims are strongly advised to follow our specific guidance about staying safe and healthy when travelling.

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