

## Current major event

### Health advisories for travelers to Saudi Arabia, Hajj, 1432 H

The Ministry of Health of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has recently issued the health requirements for entry visas for Hajj and Umrah performers for the year 2011 (1432 H).

### Editorial note

Every year, at the request of the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, WHO is publishing the "*Health conditions for travelers to Saudi Arabia for the pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj)*" to inform visitors of the full requirements for entry into Saudi Arabia for the Hajj and Umrah. However, these stipulated requirements and conditions do not imply an endorsement by WHO.

Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, is the largest and most long-standing annual mass gathering event on earth. The number of people attending this event has nearly doubled in the past decade, reaching almost 2.5 million in 2010 from over 160 countries of whom at least 1.6 million were foreign visitors. This presents an enormous and daunting challenge to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabian authorities. The inevitable overcrowding of such large number of people in a relatively confined area increases the risk of many infections and amplifies health risks, particularly the infectious diseases of potential concerns. Of these public health concerns, influenza and other associated respiratory infections are the most frequently reported complaint and are caused by a variety of viruses and bacteria. The outbreaks of meningococcal meningitis caused by W135 strains in 2000 and 2001, that occurred amongst the Hajj pilgrims and their close contacts worldwide, with the associated high mortality showed the potential for international spread of infectious diseases associated with mass gatherings.

With the rise in global travel, preventing disease transmission has become paramount to avoid the spread of infectious

### Health requirements and recommendations for Hajj and Umrah, 1432 H

1. It is recommended that all pilgrims, particularly those with preexisting health conditions like the elderly, obese, pregnant women and people with chronic respiratory or heart diseases or cardiac, hepatic or renal failure, be vaccinated against seasonal influenza before they arrive in Saudi Arabia with WHO approved strains specific to northern or southern hemisphere;
2. Children under 15 years of age coming from countries affected by poliomyelitis should be vaccinated with the oral polio vaccine (OPV), at least 6 weeks before their travel date. People (all ages) arriving from polio-endemic countries are required to submit a vaccination certificate stating that they have received OPV six weeks before their arrival in the KSA;
3. All pilgrims arriving from countries at risk of Yellow fever (YF) transmission need to present a valid YF vaccination certificate showing that the person was vaccinated at least 10 days before and not more than 10 years before arrival;
4. Pilgrims (including children above 2 years) from all countries are required to produce a certificate of vaccination with the quadrivalent (ACYW135) vaccine against meningococcal meningitis issued not more than 3 years previously and not less than 10 days before arrival.

### Other health advisories

- Hajj and Umrah performers are not allowed to bring with them any kind of food stuff from their countries, unless it is canned, sealed or in easily opened containers for checking ingredients;
- In the event of any health emergency or outbreaks, the health authorities in Saudi Arabia, subject to notification under the IHR (2005), may take any additional preventive precautions (not included in the measures mentioned above ) following consultation with WHO to avoid the spread of infections among pilgrims .

diseases and protect global public health. The battle against spread of travel-related infections, therefore, remains a shared responsibility for protecting international health security. The health authorities of the countries sending pilgrims for Hajj and Umrah should co-ordinate with different government and private sector bodies and implement appropriate public health preventive measures amongst the pilgrims before their departure to the KSA. A multi-pronged approach involving awareness programme for pilgrims, in line with health advisories should also be considered.

The benefits from such measures may go beyond the Hajj in protecting public health security. On-going disease surveillance and data analysis is also necessary to better understand health risks in such mass gathering events and strengthen evidence base for setting appropriate health policies for pilgrims attending and returning from such religious mass gatherings. .

## Update on outbreaks

### in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

**Measles** in Afghanistan; **A(H5N1)** in Egypt; **Cholera** in Afghanistan and Pakistan, **Brucellosis & Q fever** in Afghanistan. **Wild polio type 3** in Pakistan

## Current public health events of international concern

[cumulative N° of cases (deaths), **CFR** %]

### Avian influenza

Egypt	[150 (52), <b>34.7%</b> ]
Indonesia	[178 (146), <b>82.0 %</b> ]
Viet Nam	[119(59), <b>49.6%</b> ]
China	[40(26), <b>65%</b> ]
Global total	[562 (329), <b>58.4%</b> ]

### HUS

Germany	[847(31) , <b>3.7%</b> ]
Europe	[47(1), <b>2.1%</b> ]
USA	[4(1), <b>25.0%</b> ]

### Brucellosis

Afghanistan	[147(0), <b>0%</b> ]
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### AWD (Cholera)

Afghanistan	[1093(11), <b>1 %</b> ]#
Pakistan	[4506(35), <b>0.8%</b> ]

CFR=Case-Fatality Rate; \* Number of hospital visits; # Suspected cases only