

Going to

# Hajj

or

# Umrah?

Protect yourself and your family,  
guard against meningitis and save lives

**The pilgrimage to Hajj or Umrah is a lifetime experience, but your journey could be ruined by illness. This leaflet explains some of the risks and offers advice on how to avoid them. It is aimed at helping you make your journey as illness free as possible.**

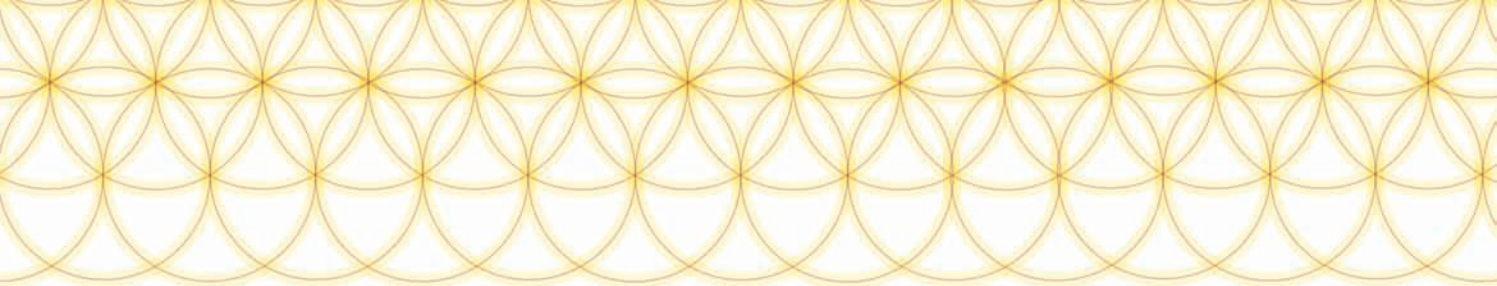
## Meningitis

Meningitis is a very real and serious risk for you and your family. You could also bring the meningitis germs back to your family and friends at home. A dangerous strain of meningitis has affected travellers to the Hajj in the previous years, and some people have died after contracting it.

All pilgrims to Hajj are required to show proof of vaccination against meningococcal meningitis ACWY. This vaccine should have been received not more than three years and not less than ten days before arrival in Saudi Arabia, and should be recorded in a vaccination book showing the traveller's full name. Vaccination is also a requirement for obtaining a visa.

Please make sure that:

- you get the right vaccine. You need to make sure your doctor gives you the '**quadrivalent**' meningococcal vaccine (ACWY Vac) which protects against four different strains of meningitis: A, C, W135 and Y.
- if you are planning to take children under the age of two years to Hajj or Umrah you will need to get them vaccinated with two doses of ACWY vaccine, ideally **three months apart**.

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- you and your family get this vaccine even if you have had a different meningitis vaccine in the past. Neither the meningitis vaccine your child(ren) will have had as part of their routine vaccinations (called Men C), nor the vaccine previously recommended for travel will give you the protection you need.
  - you get a certificate after having had the vaccination providing it's given within the last three years.

**Talk to your doctor if you are in any doubt or phone NHS Direct on 0845 46 47\***

\*Calls charged at local rates.

NHS Direct can provide confidential interpreters, in many languages including Urdu, Bengali, Punjabi, Gujarati, Arabic, Turkish and Somali, within minutes of your call. All you need to do is state in English the language you would prefer to use.

## Why do I need this quadrivalent immunisation for Hajj?

The W135 strain of meningitis is deadly and differs from other meningitis strains usually caught in the UK. Previous vaccination against meningitis A and C does not protect you against the W135 strain. Receiving the quadrivalent meningitis vaccination will not only protect you, but will substantially reduce the risk of infecting your friends, family and community on your return.

The Saudi Arabian Government has made vaccination against the ACWY strains a visa entry requirement, so you may be refused entry if you do not have a valid certificate showing that you have received the quadrivalent meningitis vaccination within the last three years.

Pilgrims are strongly advised to book an appointment with their GP **three or more weeks** before travel to allow time for the practice to order the ACWY vaccine, and to allow sufficient time for it to become fully effective. And if you are planning to take children under the age of two years, you should book about four months in advance. Please take a copy of this leaflet with you to your GP.

## Health tips

Travelling anywhere in the world brings with it some risk to health. Travel on Hajj or Umrah carries additional risks because:

- The weather is likely to be hotter than you are used to.
- You will be in very large crowds.
- You may have to walk long distances.
- Clean water and sanitation are difficult to maintain in these circumstances.

However, by taking certain – often simple – steps, you can minimise your exposure to almost any health hazard. Please take time to read these simple tips, and you and your family will reduce the risk of falling ill at Hajj or Umrah.

- Don't leave your preparations too late – start them in good time.
- Ask your doctor about other vaccinations you should have before you go or visit [www.nathnac.org](http://www.nathnac.org)

- If you suffer from any ailment such as a heart or chest condition or diabetes, tell your doctor or specialist that you are planning to undertake this journey and ask their advice on how to reduce your chances of becoming ill. Also ask them for a report to carry with you, with a list of your usual medications.
- If you are on any medication from your doctor, make sure you have enough for the whole trip and carry it with you.
- Take an umbrella and sun cream to protect against the sun.
- Make sure you carry with you plenty of clean drinking water.
- Try to get plenty of rest.
- Keep all your belongings and surroundings as clean as possible at all times.
- For the most up to date information regarding travel vaccines visit [www.nathnac.org](http://www.nathnac.org)

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**Immunisation Information**