



*Embassy of the United States of America
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia*

How to Stay Healthy: MERS-CoV and Upcoming Hajj

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Hajj is coming soon when millions of people will be traveling to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Travel and transit through Saudi Arabia will increase before and after Eid Al-Adha. We wanted to take this opportunity to remind individuals on how to stay healthy bearing in mind the regional issue of MERS-CoV.

MERS CoV, or Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus, is a virus that causes respiratory illness with hallmark symptoms of fever, cough and shortness of breath. Some people may experience diarrhea and nausea/vomiting. The largest number of confirmed cases of MERS is in Saudi Arabia with smaller numbers confirmed in the region, namely Qatar, UAE, Jordan, Oman, Kuwait, Iran, Lebanon and Yemen. MERS Co-V is thought to spread by the respiratory secretions of an infected individual, for example, when one coughs or sneezes, or through contact with contaminated surfaces. Transmission of the virus is not fully understood and is still being studied. It is worth noting that there has been no evidence in countries with confirmed cases that sustained human-to-human transmission is occurring. Transmission has occurred between close contacts or caregivers of infected individuals. There also seems to be an association between MERS CoV and camels, so it is best to avoid camels or follow good personal hygiene if you come into contact with the animal. Do not consume raw or undercooked camel meat and do not drink unpasteurized camel milk.

If you are planning to attend Hajj and have underlying medical conditions, you should consult your physician before traveling to review your risks and discuss options. When exposed to large crowds of people, you should always practice good hygiene. Wash your hands frequently and particularly before eating. Do not touch your eyes, nose and mouth unless you have just washed your hands thoroughly with soap and water. Covering your mouth with a tissue or the sleeve of your arms when coughing or sneezing will help prevent the spread of germs. Clean contaminated surfaces every day using antiseptic from a pharmacy. Eat healthy, nutritious meals and get adequate sleep while traveling and after.

If you attend Hajj and within a 2-3 week period develop unexplained fever, persistent cough, diarrhea, or weakness, it is very important to seek medical advice and inform your doctor of your recent travel.

For additional information, please see our [Hajj Fact Sheet](#) and the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) website.

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