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Vaccines for Umrah & Hajj

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

Dear beloved Khidmatul Awaam Hujjaaj and Mutamireen

Below are the vaccines that are required by Saudi authorities as well as those recommended by health experts for travel to places where mass gatherings occur such as Umrah and Hajj. This useful list is compiled by Dr Salim Parker for the Islamic Medical Association of South Africa (IMASA) for distribution.

REQUIRED

1) Quadrivalent Meningococcal Vaccine

This is a visa requirement for Hajj and Umrah. The current available one, though only licenced for ages from 6 months till 55 years in South Africa, is still recommended for all adult pilgrims by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), USA and by South African meningitis experts irrespective of age. The vaccine has been proven to be safe and effective in older age groups. It is valid for 5 years. More information at: <http://www.hajjdoctor.co.za/publications/2017/publications/August-Publications.pdf>

2) Yellow Fever Vaccine

The Royal Saudi Embassy in Pretoria requires proof of this vaccine. It is not to be used for those allergic to eggs, pregnant women, those with cancer or on cancer treatment, and those whose immune systems are compromised. Age over 60, contrary to popular belief, is NOT a contraindication and the travel medicine practitioner should assess the safety of the vaccine for every pilgrim. The South African Society of Travel Medicine (SASTM) recommends repeat vaccination every 10 years. There is no problem with repeat vaccines in the older healthy traveller if indicated. More information at: <http://www.sastm.org.za/> and go to the link on SASTM yellow fever policy

RECOMMENDED

1) Influenza Vaccine

This is not a visa requirement but is highly recommended. Two thirds of South African Hajj travellers get sick every year with more than 70% having flu-like symptoms. The influenza vaccine is relatively effective, cheap and contrary to widely held perceptions, DOES NOT CAUSE DISEASE. It is an inactivated vaccine and can protect the pilgrim in close to 50% of cases or reduce the severity of the disease. It is especially recommended for the older pilgrim and those with medical problems such as diabetes, heart and lung conditions.

2) Pneumococcal Vaccine

Pneumonia is one of the leading causes of hospitalisation during Hajj. The older pilgrim, those with diabetes, heart patients, asthmatics and chronic lung patients, as well as those with impaired immunity are strongly advised to take this vaccine. See: <http://www.hajjdoctor.co.za/hajj-travel>

3) Routine Adult Vaccines

Hujjaaj are also advised to ensure that their diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (DTP) and polio vaccines are up to date. A single vaccine effective against all four diseases is available. Hepatitis A vaccine is also recommended especially for younger pilgrims. Typhoid and Hepatitis B vaccines are not routinely advised and depends on the prevalence of the diseases.

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