

DELAYING MENSES

It is preferable to adjust your periods 3-4 months before Hajj using hormones so that no adjustment is needed during the Hajj period. It is possible and permissible to delay periods for convenience by taking appropriate hormone tablets. Your doctor/gynaecologist can guide you.

THE MARBLE FLOORS IN THE HARAMAIN

The marble can be very slippery when wet. Please take extra care to avoid slipping. Severe injuries can occur on the elbows, wrists, back or hips from a fall.

In bright sunshine, the white marble shines brilliantly. Those people who have sensitive eyes should wear sun glasses. Walking on the marble bare feet can cause the feet to dry out, e.g., during Tawaf. Wear ordinary or leather socks, if this becomes a problem. Use urea-containing moisturizers.

THE LARGE CROWDS

Avoid going into large crowds. Go to the masjid ½ hour before adhan and leave the masjid ½ hour after the salah has ended. Take this opportunity to make more ibadaat.

BEFORE HAJ

From the 1st of Dhul Hijjah, ensure that you are physically and spiritually fit for the 5 days of Hajj. Treat any conditions that require attention. Do not over-exert yourself. Have adequate rest. Try to connect with Allah Subhanahu Watha'ala. The main purpose of your visit is close. You need to be in peak condition.

THE FIVE DAYS OF HAJ

Be as helpful as possible to all around you. Do not push under any circumstance. Keep a space in front of you so that your feet are not injured. Protect the vulnerable in your company. Remain focused on your mission. Avoid people who distract you from your purpose. Carry your medication in a safe, dry place. Insulin must be kept with a cold pack. Do not carry unnecessary items in your luggage. Avoid the "just in case" syndrome.

By taking care of your health, you will not compromise someone else's Hajj.

Please take your medications on time. Watch your diet if you are diabetic.

Do not over-eat. Eat small meals, have adequate fluid intake and keep out of the sun unless necessary. Do not

avoid fluids to prevent you from using the toilets. This can have disastrous consequences (heat exhaustion and dehydration). Do not rush to stone the Jamarat. Wait for a suitable opportunity and enjoy rejecting Shaitan. Wear secured footwear. Avoid bending to look for lost footwear in crowded situations. You may get pushed to the ground.

If an injury is sustained, clean it well with an antiseptic solution or water, use an antibiotic or antiseptic cream if available. Seek medical help for deep wounds or severe sprains.

IMMUNISATIONS

Yellow Fever and Meningo-coccal (4 strain) vaccines are essential for all pilgrims from Sub-Saharan Africa. Take the vaccines at least 2 weeks or earlier before departure. If you are unable to take any of the vaccines, e.g., pregnancy, a letter from your doctor to verify the pregnancy is required for the visa.

It is highly recommended that you take an Influenza vaccine.

Hepatitis A vaccine should also be taken, especially if you are going to eat foods prepared outside the hotels.

SAHUC MEDICAL MISSION

On arrival in Saudi Arabia, familiarize yourself with the location of the SAHUC Medical Mission. The Medical Mission will help you in treating any acute medical problems. Do not rely on this source of medication for your chronic medicines as it would be impossible to carry all the medication everybody would need.

BEFORE DEPARTURE

Every returning Haji must take one 500mg Ciprobay tablet, 24 hours prior to departure. This is prophylaxis to prevent your relatives from contracting Meningococcal Meningitis. This tablet is available free from your agent from the SAHUC Clinic.

CONCLUSION

Adequate preparations for one of the most important journeys in your life will, Insha Allah make the performance of Hajj a successful and memorable experience.

May Allah Subhanahu Watha'ala take you safely and bring you back safely. May you have a successful and acceptable Hajj, Ameen.

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HEALTH GUIDELINES FOR HAJ AND UMRA

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Hajj is one of the fundamental pillars of Islam. Hajj is compulsory for those who can afford it. It is therefore very important for those performing Hajj to be both physically and spiritually prepared to perform this once in a lifetime ibadat.

Here are some health guidelines to make the performance of Hajj and Umrah such that more quality time can be devoted to ibadaat.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

Hajj and Umrah are easier for physically fit people. One should improve physical fitness about 6 to 8 weeks before departure. Brisk walks for about 30-45 minutes 3 to 4 times a week going up to 5 to 10 km. at a time would be ideal. Start slow and increase. Walk in your "Ihraam" footwear and your backpack if you are doing the walking Hajj, to break them in so that the footwear and the backpack become user-friendly. Continue your fitness in the Haramain. If you are over-weight, go onto a low calorie diet and exercise to lose weight. The less weight you carry, the easier it is to do the physical aspects of Hajj and Umrah.

Wheel chairs are available free of charge in Makkah and Madinah.

FLUID INTAKE

Because of the very hot, dry weather conditions, hydration is important. Tap water is not safe to drink. One can brush teeth and make wudhu with tap water. Zam Zam is freely available. Drink as much Zam Zam as possible. Bottled water is also available and distributed free on the days of Hajj. Fruit juices are also available. Diabetics should make sure that no sugar is added to the fruit juices. Fluid intake should be about 12 large glasses a day. If your urine is concentrated, your fluid levels are down. Restricting water intake to avoid going to the toilet can lead to heat exhaustion.

Drinking very cold Zam Zam can cause a sore throat, as it is chemically cooled.

FOOD INTAKE

One should continue to eat a healthy, well balanced diet and should be wary of unusual foods. One should be cautious about food purchased from street vendors. Make sure that your fibre intake is high to avoid constipation.

CONSTIPATION

Constipation is usually caused by inadequate fibre and/or fluid intake. The fear of using "unknown" toilets can lead one to postpone the use of the toilet. Familiarise yourself with the toilets, take in adequate fibre (bran cereals, dried fruit, fruit and vegetables) and insist on adequate fluid intake. Constipation leads to piles and anal fissures, which are unpleasant and painful. If you have a constipation problem despite your diet, take a stool softener daily (Lacson, Laxette, Movicol, etc.).

DIARRHOEA AND VOMITING

Gastro-enteritis (diarrhoea, vomiting and fever) is usually spread by viruses or by infected foods. Make sure that the food source is clean, wash all raw fruit and vegetables thoroughly, peel fruit before eating. Cooking kills the viruses and bacteria. Viral gastro-enteritis is usually spread by contact with an infected person. Keep away from people who have the virus. If this is not possible, wash hands regularly after touching the infected person. Do not kiss or hug an infected person until the virus is gone (about 5 days). If you are infected, keep away from people. Stop vomiting by using anti-emetics like maxolon, valoid, etc. Do not stop the diarrhoea as the body is trying to get rid of the virus. Use buscopan or scopex to stop stomach cramps. If diarrhoea occurs more than 6 times in 24 hours, then lomitol or Imodium may be used to slow the diarrhoea. Drink extra fluids especially, Zam Zam, rehydrating fluids, honey water and fruit juices.

DIABETES

Visit your doctor 2 to 3 months before departure and get optimal diabetic control. Make sure that you have enough of your medication and test strips to last you for at least a week after your expected return, just in case your flight is delayed. Keep on a strict diet during your stay. Monitor your glucose levels frequently. Beware of fruit juices that have sugar added to them. Take extra precautions not to injure yourself, especially on your feet. Leave enough space in front of you when walking in crowded situations. Consult a doctor if your glucose is persistently high or low or if you develop an infection.

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

Visit your doctor 2 to 3 months before departure and get optimal control of your blood pressure. Take your medication on time. Those on diuretics may need their medication adjusted in view of the climatic conditions there. This should be done on the advice of a doctor. Consult a doctor if you experience blurred vision, unexplained headaches, dizziness, disorientation or swelling of the ankles and feet.

SKIN CARE

The dry weather conditions in Saudi Arabia can cause cracking of the skin, especially on the heel area. Deep fissures can develop with a possibility of infection. Cellulitis can occur, requiring the person to keep the feet elevated for 3-4 days. If this occurs before Hajj starts, it can make it very difficult. This is especially important for diabetics. Moisturize regularly with a good moisturizer like Vaseline, heel balms and urea-containing moisturizers. Use socks, ordinary or leather to protect the feet on the marble floors. Beware of slipping on wet marble. Because of the rubbing of the scrotum against the upper thigh whilst walking in Ihraam without underwear, a painful rash can develop. Avoid this by applying large amounts of Vaseline on the inside of the upper thigh throughout Umrah and the first 3 days of Hajj. This applies more so to people who are going to walk throughout Hajj. If you are unfortunate enough to get this painful condition, a steroid cream helps very quickly.

FUNGAL INFECTIONS

Fungal infections, especially of the feet should be treated before departure. Dry the areas between the toes after wudhu. Use an anti-fungal cream regularly. Fungal infections can also lead to cellulitis.

BACK CARE

Avoid back strain, especially if you have a history of back problems, as healing can take anything from 2 – 6 weeks. Travel lightly with bags with wheels. Avoid lifting heavy items. If you have to lift, ask for help or lift with a straight back by bending your knees. At the first sign of back pain, stop whatever activity is causing the pain to prevent it from becoming worse. Seek medical attention early.

ARTHRITIS

Those people who suffer from arthritis of the back, hips, knees or ankles should lose weight as fast as possible prior to departure if they are overweight. Start treatment before departure to get the arthritis under control. Be guided by your doctor or physiotherapist on the exercises you can do to strengthen your muscles before departure. Stronger muscles take the pressure off the joints. Carry your medication with you.

GOUT

Continue your preventative medication diligently and continuously. Take the medication for controlling an attack of gout from your doctor just in case of an attack. Be strict with your gout diet.

MEDICINES

Most medicines are available in Saudi Arabia. Your particular chronic medication (medicines you take daily) may not be available in Saudi Arabia. Please ensure that you have adequate supplies of your medication, taking an extra weeks' supply just in case your flight is delayed. Also, keep some money in reserve just in case you have to purchase some medications.

It is essential that you take a letter from your doctor specifying your illnesses, the chronic medication you are on and the dosage. Otherwise, all medicines you take must have your name on the labels. It would be helpful for doctors if you carried a list of your medications and your hotel card on you at all times.

Medicines that may be helpful to take include pain-killers, tablets for nausea (maxolon, valoid), for stomach cramps (buscopan, scopex), for diarrhoea (Imodium, lomitol), for runny nose (Actifed), for infections (co-amoxycillin, erymycin if allergic to penicillin), citirizine or loratadine for allergies, etc. Do not carry liquid medicines in bottles.