

KCDC Advises Hajj Travelers to Saudi Arabia to Take Precautions Against MERS [15.Aug.(Wed).2018]

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- ☐ The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention expects an increase in the number of travelers to Saudi Arabia and other areas in the Middle East during the Hajj period (August 19th to 24th) and advises them to take necessary precautions to prevent the spread of MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus).
 - * Hajj is the religious pilgrimage of members of the Islamic faith to the Saudi Arabian cities of Mecca, Medina, and Jeddah. During the Hajj period in 2017 (August 30th to September 4th), approximately 450 individuals traveled to the Middle East from the Republic of Korea (ROK).
- ☐ The Ministry of Health in Saudi Arabia and medical experts advise those with underlying medical conditions, such heart disease, kidney disease, lung disease, diabetes, and weak immune systems, those who are pregnant, the elderly, and young children to postpone pilgrimage plans for their own health and safety.
- ☐ In 2018, there have been 108 global cases of MERS and 26 deaths. 106 (98%) of these cases and all 26 deaths occurred in Saudi Arabia.
 - * As of August 8, 2018, KCDC has received 839 reports of potential MERS cases and 144 of them were classified as suspected cases, all of whom ultimately tested negative.
- ☐ In order to strengthen control efforts and prevent the spread of MERS, KCDC is working closely with the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Seoul, and travel agencies involved in Hajj travel planning. Together, they are providing important information to those traveling to the Middle East and strengthening quarantine measures for those returning from the Middle East.
- ☐ Due to the ongoing cases of MERS in the Middle East, KCDC advises travelers to the region to avoid visiting hospitals and other medical facilities unless necessary. When visiting such facilities, KCDC urges the use of masks to prevent the spread of MERS.
- ☐ When visiting the Middle East, travelers are advised to avoid contact with camels, which have been indicated as a source of primary infection, and camel products, including the consumption of camel meat and milk, and are also advised to practice proper hand hygiene.
- ☐ Travelers who experience any fever, cough, or other respiratory symptoms within 14 days upon returning to Korea should refrain from visiting hospitals and are advised to contact the KCDC 1339 Call Center or visit a local public health center for further instructions.