



# A Healthy Hajj

## Information for Healthcare Professionals



# Outline

- **Introduction – Hajj duties**
- **Maintaining Good Health**
  - Religious duty
  - Exercise & Diet
- **Precautions Before Travel**
  - Vaccinations
    - Meningitis & Flu
  - Chest Infections
  - Chronic Illnesses
  - Essential Kit
- **Precautions During Hajj**
  - Heat & Dehydration
  - Other Infections
  - Head shaving
- **Measures Upon Return**
  - Rest
  - Symptoms to look out for



# The Hajj

- Fifth pillar of Islam – the Sacrifice by Abraham
- Compulsory\* once in a lifetime journey
- Last month of the Islamic Calendar (Dhul Hijjah)
- Lunar year - 10 days shorter than Gregorian year and Hajj occurs at different times of the year
- Pilgrims arrive at different times
- Crowds are Huge with millions of Pilgrims
- Open all hours



# The Hajj March

## ▪ Duties and rites during Hajj are physically demanding

### • Makkah:

- Kabah (Tawaaf)
- Safa & Marwah (Sai'ee)

### • Mina (Tent City):

- 7 km away, staying 5 days in tents

- (40 per tent); grouped by country

### - Arafat

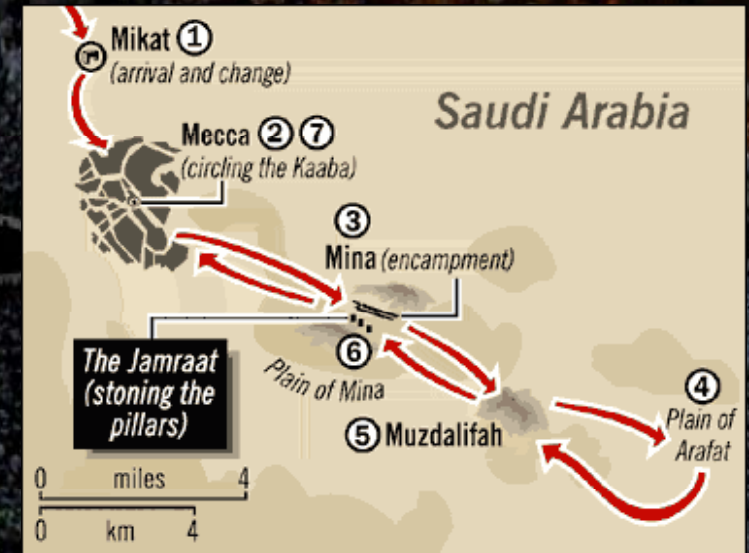
### - Muzdalifah:

- Stay over night in open space (Unsheltered) to collect pebbles

### - Symbolic stone throwing

## ▪ It is obligatory that everyone going:

- Is well prepared
- Takes the necessary preventative measures
- Maintains good health

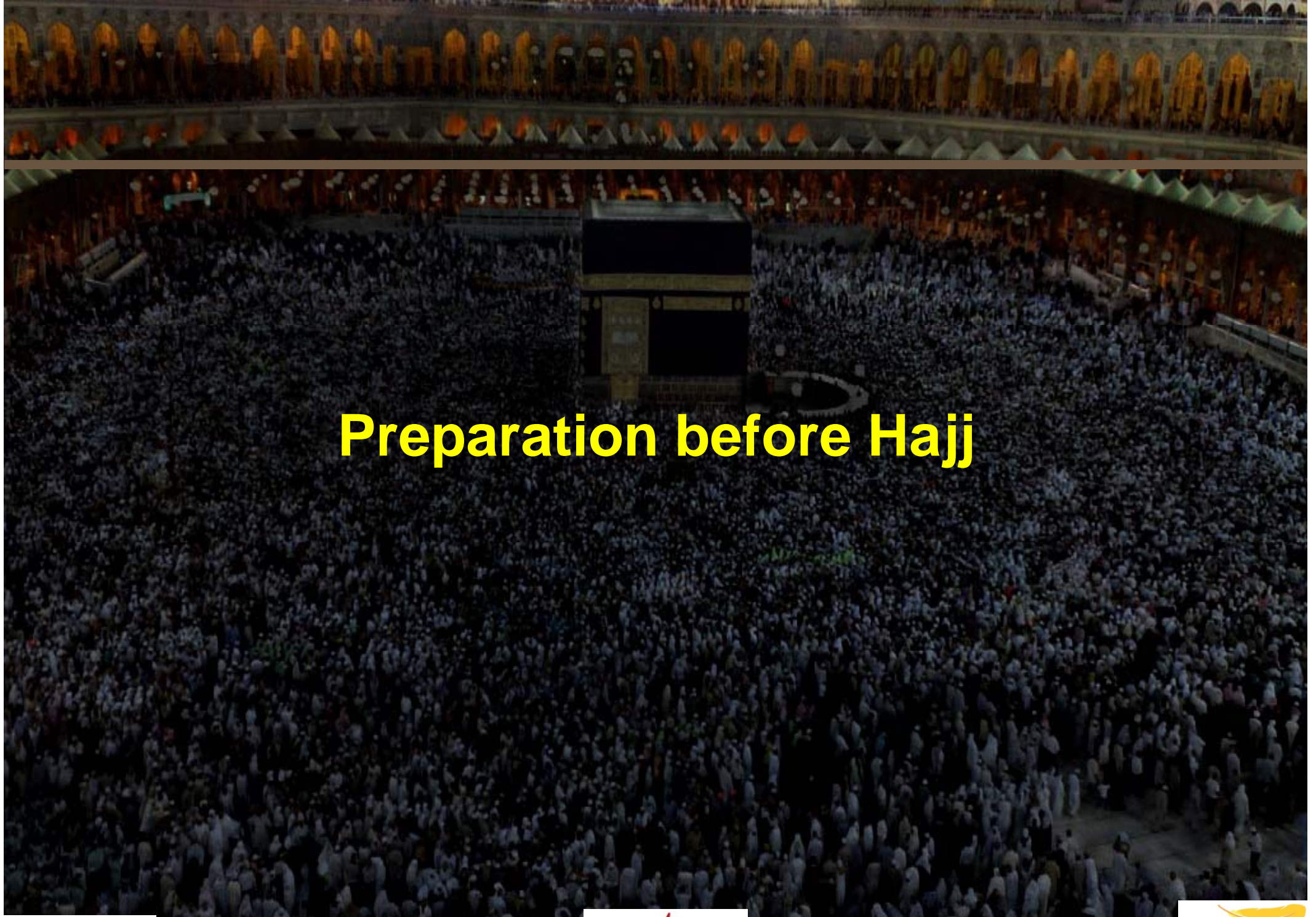




# Health: Islamic Principles

- Good health pre-requisite able bodied & means to do so
- Maintaining good health a duty (body is *Amanah*)
- Cleanliness is half of ones Faith
  - Importance of washing hands
- Prevention / quarantine
- For every disease there is a cure (except old age)
- A day lost to ill-health is a day lost in Ibadah
  - Ill health that affects ourselves AND others around us





# Preparation before Hajj



# Maintaining Good Health

## ■ Physical fitness

### • Walking as much as possible

- e.g., starting about 6 to 8 weeks before departure, walking greater and greater distances as the time of departure arrives.

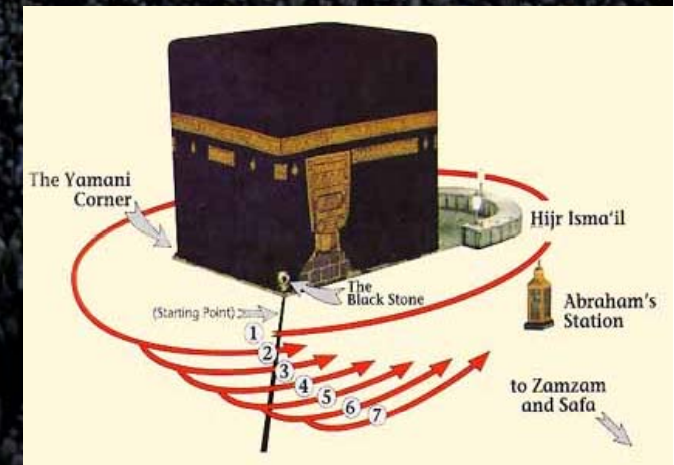
### - Total distance to walk:

- approximately 10 – 12 kilometers to Arafat & 10 – 12 Kilometers back to Makkah.
- Tawaf ~ approximately 200 meters to 2 kilometers and may take 2 or 3 hours during Hajj
- Sai (Safa – Marwa) ~ approximately 3.5 km.

## ■ Nutrition

### • Maintain good & sensible eating habits

- 'If [a believer] has to fill his stomach, then let him leave one-third for food, one-third for drink and one-third for air' (Tirmidhi)





# Health Issues

- **Knowing about your own health**
  - Own disease & medicines
  - Chronic illnesses: Heart, Lung, Diabetes
- **Knowing what to expect:**
  - Extraordinary\_mass gathering
    - Shared tents
  - Stampedes & Crushing
    - Physically demanding
  - Infectious diseases
    - Meningitis & Blood Poisoning
    - Chest infections: Influenza & pneumonia
    - Hepatitis (A, B & C)
    - Polio
- **Knowing what to expect:**
  - **Non-Infectious health issues**
    - Heat exhaustion & Sunburn
    - High humidity
    - Physical injuries
    - Foot wear problems
    - Stampede Trauma (much improved facilities)
    - Traffic accidents
    - Slaughter related injury
- **Getting Lost**
  - carry ID: wrist band, Photo ID card



# Preparations before the Journey

- GP/nurse best placed to assess health requirements
  - Patients should seek advice from GP in advance
- Make sure GP/nurses knows what performance of Hajj entails
  - Without this they may not be able to give advice appropriate to patient health circumstances
- Added incentive to encourage patients to stop smoking for good.
- Cessation of periods 5mg tds Norethisterone 3 days before and stop on return
- Make sure that patients have good travel & health insurance
- Make sure that patient relatives know how to contact them





# Prep: Hajj Visa Requirements

- The applicant must submit proof of vaccination for meningitis [C] and [meningitis] ACYW135.
- The certificate of vaccination should have been issued not more than three years and not less than 10 days prior to entering Saudi Arabia.
- For infants and children up to 15 years of age, a vaccination report is required for polio as well as meningitis.
- Children over 15 years of age should present the same vaccinations requested for adults.



# Prep: Vaccine Preventable Risks in Arabia

- **Meningococcal Meningitis (Essential)**
- Influenza (strongly advisable)
- Hepatitis B (Advisable)
- Hepatitis A (Advisable)
- Typhoid (Advisable)
- Diphtheria (Advisable)
- Rabies (Consider)
- Tetanus (Consider)





# Prep: Flu Vaccines

- Influenza vaccine recommended for all pilgrims
  - Influenza spreads very fast in the crowded situations
  - Important for people over 65
  - Important for people with chronic health problems
- Pneumococcal vaccine also very important
  - for the over 65s
  - for people who have chronic illnesses like
    - asthma,
    - diabetes,
    - chronic heart disease,
    - chronic kidney or spleen disease



# Prep: Pre-Hajj Diabetes Check

- About 20% of Muslims in UK have diabetes (higher in elderly)
- About 2 months before going on Hajj patients should:
  - see their GP/Nurse to inform them that they are going on Hajj
  - request an annual review of diabetes.

## The health care professional should check

- HbA1c, lipids and kidney function
- Assess diabetes control, any complications from diabetes
- Make changes to medication if required & advise on Hypoglycemia
- Give travel and vaccination advise
- Also use this opportunity to discuss your risk of heart disease, feet problems and any precautions that they need to take and when to seek medical attention.



# Prep: Basic Advice

## ■ Chronic diseases

Asthma, Diabetes Heart

- Take plenty of medication
- Take repeat prescription form
- Keep medication in hand luggage
- Covering letter

## ■ Serious Conditions

- Hospital consultant
- Contact number
- Hospital number

## ■ An Example: Diabetics

- know the symptoms of a “hypo” and how to treat it
- Keep a sugary snack with you
- Keep insulin in the fridge if possible and take plenty of needles
- ID card / Medic alert bracelet
- Storage devices for Insulin



# Prep: Basic Advice

- Controlled drugs (eg., morphine) are banned in Saudi Arabia
  - Get a letter from your GP if you are on them
  - Keep a copy of prescription
- Troublesome teeth
  - See a dentist before going
- Walking
  - Take comfortable sandals
  - Take wheelchair / walking stick if needed
  - Folding chairs available in Saudi for small charge



# Prep: Essential Kit List

- Painkillers
- Umbrella, sun cream & Sunglasses
- Clove oil for toothache
- Plasters & bandages
- Insect repellent
- Antiseptic cream (eg., Savlon)
- Water sterilisation tablets
- Salt – 1/2 teaspoon plus 5 level tsp sugar in 2pints of water
- Healthy Hajj Booklet & Information
- Medication & letters with spares
- Vaseline
- Scissors and blades
- Small plasters
- Anti-Dairrhoea medication (eg., Loperamide)
- Throat Lozenges
- Spare spectacles
- Hearing aid batteries
- Moisturiser





# At Hajj



# Coughs and sneezes spread diseases



always carry tissues



cover your coughs and sneezes



throw used tissues in a bin



always clean your hands

## Stop germs spreading

## CATCH IT

Germs spread easily. Always carry tissues and use them to catch your cough or sneeze.



## BIN IT

Germs can live for several hours on tissues. Dispose of your tissue as soon as possible.



## KILL IT

Hands can transfer germs to every surface you touch. Clean your hands as soon as you can.





# Hajj: Heat and Dehydration

- Extreme temperatures > 35-40°C
  - Dry heat
  - Exposure of body & minimal clothing
  - No head gear
  - Sweating
  - Physical exertion- walking/ carrying load etc
  - Travelling and therefore not drinking plenty – Kidney Stones
  - water and salt intake
- ☑ Avoid sun when it is around its zenith & stay under shade when possible
  - ☑ Travel at night
  - ☑ Use umbrella – preferably white
  - ☑ Consume large volumes of fluid in the day...plain water or Zam Zam
    - ☑ Always carry an extra water canister/bottle
  - ☑ Avoid open buses
  - ☑ Wash face/hands and feet....wudu
  - ☑ Increase salt intake



# Hajj: Chest Infections (& 'Hajj Cough')

- Can affect all individuals: Hot day & cold night
- Overcrowding
  - Infections are bound to spread easily
- Avoid close contact with people who are ill
  - While visiting the ill keep your distance & spend a little time there
- Pre-existing conditions
  - Asthma, diabetes, heart disease makes people more vulnerable
- If people are ill:
  - Cover your mouth before coughing (or use a mask)
  - Avoid spitting phlegm onto the pavement (spreads germs!)
  - Washing hands with soap & water



# Hajj: Head shaving

- **Protection from risk of Hepatitis B & C, and HIV!**
  - Some pilgrims come from places where infection is very common
- **Always insist on use of new blade**
- **Do not share scissors or razors**
  - Possibly carry own scissors & disposable razors
- **May be possible to use a modern clipper**





# Hajj: Infection, Blisters or Groins Irritation

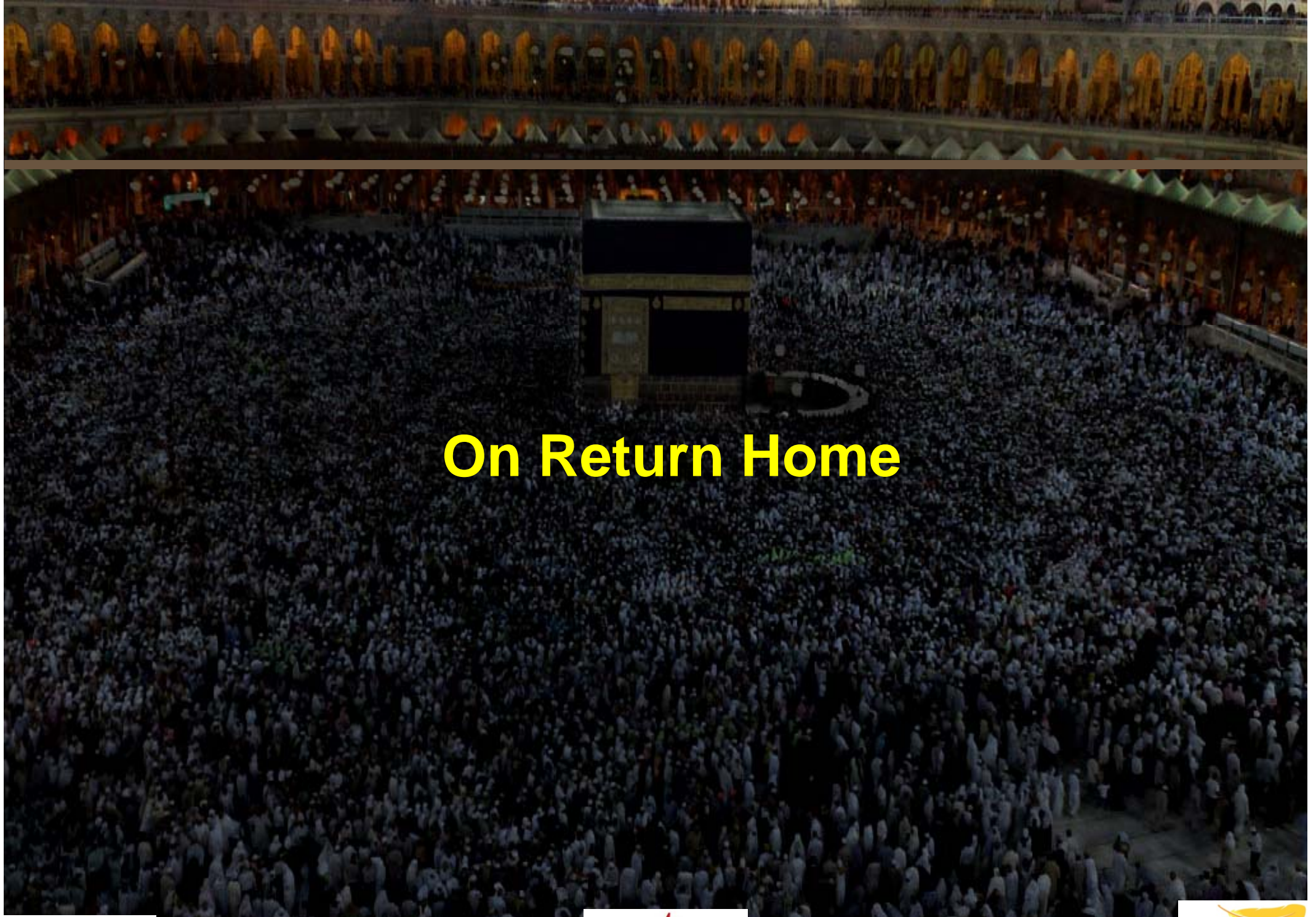
- **Constant walking whilst hot and sweaty**
- **Constant rubbing with garments**
  - Avoid materials which rub on the skin
  - use Vaseline or Talcum powder
- **Groin irritation and inflammation**
  - Use soothing cream like Sudocrem/E45
- **Apply plasters / bandages if needed for blisters**
- **Take adequate rest & elevate feet**
- **Remove sand if it gets into footwear**
  - Never walk barefoot as it burns



# Hajj: Advice for Diabetics

- Know the symptoms of a “hypo” and how to treat it
- Keep a sugary snack handy
- Keep insulin in the fridge if possible BUT always keep it away from direct sunlight.
- Take plenty of needles and advise on how to dispose of the needles
- Check blood sugar regularly especially if taking Insulin
- ID card/ Medic alert bracelet
- Storage devices for Insulin
- Diabetes is the commonest cause of feet amputations.
- A small injury on feet can get worse rapidly and result in amputations.
- Use sensible foot wear.
- Keep feet clean and dry.
- Diabetic neuropathy (loss of sensation) in feet or problems with blood circulation - special care needs to be taken and feet examined regularly.
- If there is an injury to feet seek immediate medical attention and start antibiotics.





# On Return Home



# Home: Chronic Disease Care

- Chronic disease medication
  - Resume normal treatment doses on return
- Diabetes
  - Foot care – consult with Specialist on return
- Hypertension
  - ensure blood pressure check on return



# Home: Rest on Return

- Do not return to work straight away after returning from Hajj
- Ensure rest period of 1-2 days after Hajj prior to returning to work or resuming normal daily activities
- Get good amount of sleep on return
- Eat well and drink plenty of fluids on return
- Any worrying symptoms seek Medical Advice (see next slide)
- Remember to inform Dr/nurse that you have been for Hajj



# Home: Symptoms on Return

- Doctors should be vigilant for signs of diseases such as:
  - Meningitis – flu-like symptoms, rash, muscle pain
  - Tuberculosis – unexplained weight loss and cough, with fever
  - Malaria – if temperature not settling with 24-48 hours or intermittent spikes  
(N/A for Hajj traveller - relevant for pilgrims who have combined Hajj with travel to endemic areas)
  - Hepatitis – jaundice
    - » Hep A: oro-faecal route  
(unwell within 3 wks of return)
    - » Hep B / Hep C: blood borne if head was shaved  
(unwell more than 6 wks after return)



# Meningococcal Disease

- Meningitis is inflammation of the meninges; the layers that surround and protect the brain and part of the spinal cord
- Septicaemia is blood poisoning.
- Meningococcal bacteria can cause both meningitis and septicaemia both are known as meningococcal disease
- Can affect anyone at any time – ‘adults get it too’
- No vaccine to protect against all types of meningitis
- Many people will be left with serious and disabling after-effects
- Septicaemia rash:
  - A rash that does not fade under pressure often occurs with septicaemia
- If someone is ill or getting worse, do not wait for a rash. It may appear late or not at all.





# Summary

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# Health = shared responsibility

- Host country
- Pilgrim's country
- Healthcare Professionals
- Group Leaders
- INDIVIDUALS





Any Questions?



# Thanks

- **Novartis - Special thanks for unlimited educational grant**
- MDDA (Muslim Doctors & Dentists Association)
- MCB (The Muslim Council of Britain)
- The Meningitis Trust
- Department of Health
- Health Protection Agency
- ***Slide Set Technical Expert Panel: Dr S Shafi, Dr W Hanif, Prof R Gatrad, Dr I Ahmed, Dr M Mirza, Dr N Syed***

