Hajj (or pilgrimage) is one of the five pillars of Islam and is obligatory for all adult Muslims who are healthy and can afford the journey. Over two million pilgrims gather from different nationalities to perform Hajj in and around Mecca and Madina. Hajj is considered the hardest among the other Islamic rituals as it involves walking for long distances and camping in the desert tents. Moreover, a significant number of pilgrims are elderly and may suffer from chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, which may be exacerbated during Hajj. Therefore, one of the concerns that the healthcare professionals have is Hajj performance by patients with diabetes whose stable life routine is affected by changes in weather, diet and habits.

Having diabetes should not stop people from performing Hajj; it does however mean that you need to plan and prepare in advance. With proper care, patients with diabetes will be able to travel and enjoy Hajj rituals. Therefore, we encourage you to speak to your healthcare team and discuss with them the following points:

- How to manage blood sugar,
- What to take with you for diabetes emergencies,
- How much medications and diabetes supplies to keep with you,
- How to deal with unexpected delays and illnesses, and be well prepared.

If you have any question regarding your medications, Dasman Diabetes Institute’s Clinical Pharmacology Department will be holding an outreach event called “Ask about your Medications during Hajj” at the Marina Mall in Kuwait on October 21 and 22 from 10 am to 10pm. We encourage you to stop by and ask about your medications. We look forward to seeing you there!

Also you can call one of the Medical Information Specialists at 22260000 who are available to answer your general questions about diabetes.

Diabetes Medications and Hajj

People with diabetes planning to perform pilgrimage (the Hajj), should be aware of the possible effects of heat, physical exertion, crowds, and altered routine on their health. Adequate fluid intake is essential because extreme temperatures, which can reach more than 45 °C, may lead to dehydration and heat stroke. These risks are exacerbated by the strenuous physical exertion associated with performing Hajj. People with diabetes may also be at an increased risk for hypoglycemia (low blood sugar levels); therefore, should always carry some type of sugar source to treat hypoglycemic episodes. Moreover, they should monitor their blood sugar levels more frequently during Hajj to avoid hypoglycemia.
Remember to consider the following when you go for Hajj:

- Make sure you have a list of all of your medications and your medical conditions in case of emergencies. Ask your doctor to write you a letter stating that you have diabetes, any current medications and doses, and any other medical conditions or allergies that you may have.
- Visit your doctor for a check-up several weeks before you leave and try to work out plans for your food and medication. You may need to change your insulin dose and time of administration. It is also handy to have your healthcare team phone/fax numbers during travelling.
- Get immunization and vaccination shots at least one month before you leave. If the shots make you unwell, you'll have time to recover before your trip.
- If you are taking a sulphonylurea or meglitinide tablet; or insulin for your treatment make sure you carry a source of simple carbohydrate (quick sugar source) with you such as orange juice, glucose tablets, jelly beans, or hard candy. This is because these drug classes can cause hypoglycaemia.
- It is important for you to be clear about how to manage your condition if you get sick and if you have low blood sugar levels.
- If you are taking insulin it does not need to be refrigerated after you start using it, but if it is stored in very hot or very cold temperatures it may lose its strength. Make sure you take an insulated travel pack with you to keep your insulin cool at all times.
- Avoid using local needles unless you are confident they are sterile.
- Try your best to test your blood sugar levels more frequently than usual. Your routine of physical activity and food intake will be different when you travel.
- Keep a daily record of insulin doses and test results.
- Always pack all of your diabetes supplies in your carry-on bag to ensure that they are with you at all times and that they don’t get lost or exposed to high or low temperatures during travel.
- Take a personal diabetes bag with you and make sure it contains the following:
  - Your diabetes medication and any other medications you take,
  - Blood testing supplies (include extra batteries for your glucose meter),
  - A diabetes identity card or letter stating your name and the fact you have diabetes,
  - A supply of suitable food and quick sugar sources to treat low blood glucose levels if you take insulin injections, sulphonylurea, or meglitinide tablets.
- Wear comfortable shoes and never go barefoot. Check your feet every day. Look for blisters, cuts, redness, swelling, and scratches. Get medical care at the first sign of infection or inflammation on your feet.

For more information on Diabetes and Travelling, call Diabetes Kuwait at 222 60000 and ask one of our Medical Information Specialists.
**Quiz (choose the correct answer)**

1. Which of the following is considered to be a quick sugar source:
   - A. Legumes
   - B. Jelly beans
   - C. Chocolate bar

2. When facing a foot injury during performing Hajj:
   - A. Ignore it until you get back home
   - B. Seek medical advice immediately
   - C. Cover it and continue

3. If you are due to a vaccination shot at the time of Hajj, the minimum time frame to have it is:
   - A. At least 2 days before travel
   - B. One week before travel
   - C. At least one month before travel

**Recipe of the Month**

**Pumpkin Soup**

Serves 5 people (serving size: 1 ½ cups)

**Ingredients:**
- Pumpkin (Boiled and Mashed) 2 cups (500 g)
- Olive oil 2 tablespoons (15 g)
- Onions (finely chopped) 1 medium (230 g)
- Celery (finely chopped) ½ cup (20 g)
- Carrots (shredded) 1 medium (150 g)
- Zucchini (shredded) 1 medium (100 g)
- Meat stock 4 cups
- Low fat sour cream 1 ½ tablespoons (50 g)
- Ground nutmeg ½ teaspoon (2 g)
- Black pepper ¼ teaspoon (1 g)
- Salt ½ teaspoon (2 g)

**Method:**
1. Heat olive oil in a medium sized pot and fry the onions until golden brown. Add the celery and stir.
2. Add the shredded carrots and zucchini and mix for 2 minutes.
3. Add the boiled and mashed pumpkin with the meat stock and allow to boil for 10 minutes. Season with the salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Add the sour cream and lightly stir.
4. Serve hot in 5 bowls and garnish with celery.

**Nutrition Analysis**

(Per 1 serving)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Nutrient</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories (kcal)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Fat (g)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugars (g)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein (g)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An Interview with a Healthcare Provider
Dr. Jasem Ramadan, Ph.D., FACSM
Director, Wellness & Fitness Centre - DDI

What do you need to take into account in rituals of Hajj?

The problem of hot weather

It is essential to maintain our core body temperature around 37°C. In hot weather, your body gains heat, leading to an increase in core temperature. In addition, your body generates heat when you walk or jog during the Hajj due to increased metabolism. If you do not properly dissipate heat gain, you will get heat exhaustion and heat stroke. You also sweat a lot in the heat causing a loss of body fluids and salts, adding further to heat problems. Therefore, to avoid hot weather health problems, you need to:

- Avoid direct sunlight or use an umbrella
- Drink plenty of water, even if you are not thirsty
- Taking enough time for rest and sleep as needed
- Do not push yourself. Your body needs lots of rest to cope with these problems

Hypoglycaemic episodes as result of increased physical activities

During Hajj, people perform lots of walking and jogging. It is considered as physical activity which is an excellent tool for people with diabetes, but it must be done with a little planning and extra care. It is an excellent tool for achieving weight loss, better glucose control, and cardiovascular health. Once the health care team approves the Hajj routine, it is important to the patient to follow a few guidelines:

- You must test your blood sugar before starting Hajj rituals, and possibly also eat a light snack as well.
- Some good snacks include a banana and a serving of peanut butter, an apple and a serving of cheese, or a small juice box.
- Test your blood sugar before and after you engage in the Hajj rituals and record all the results to show your doctor.
- Get involved in an exercise program two months before Hajj. This will help you to better adapt and tolerate the Hajj rituals.
- Skip hot tubs, saunas, and steam rooms after the Hajj rituals. These activities all cause increased heart rate, and could lower blood glucose even after you stop.

Quiz Answers:
(Page 3)
1. B
2. B
3. C

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Diabetes Kuwait
Resource Centre

Visit our website: www.diabetes.org.kw

Remember!
Keep your diabetes supplies with you at all times in a carry-on bag
DO NOT pack them in the luggage you are checking in
Use the Diabetes Kuwait Hajj Checklist to ensure you’re prepared for your journey to the Holy Land

Diabetes Kuwait Hajj Checklist
- Visit your doctor before you leave to have your diabetes control assessed and treatment modified if necessary given you may be more physically active than usual
- Make sure you have any recommended vaccinations
- A letter from your doctor outlining your medical conditions and treatment
- A letter from your doctor saying you’re on a pump (if applicable)
- A list of your medications for use in case of emergency
- A diabetes identity card or bracelet stating that you have diabetes
- Discuss sick day management plan with your healthcare team
- Antibiotics, anti-diarrhea medication, if advised by your doctor
- Sharps container
- Diabetes medications and the other medications you are taking
- Insulin vials/pens, a cool pack to store insulin, syringes/pen needles
- Blood glucose meter, strips, batteries, finger pricker, lancets, alcohol swabs
- Ketone strips
- Insulin pump and insulin pump consumables (if applicable)
- Low blood sugar treatment (glucose tabs, glucose gel, honey, jelly beans, glucagon etc.)
- Carbohydrate snacks in case of unforeseen delays
- First-Aid kit (band aids, antiseptic, thermometer, antifungal cream etc.)
- Comfortable, well-fitting shoes and a mirror to help you inspect your feet everyday