

# Third kind of infection risk for soccer fans traveling to Qatar

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A trio of researchers from Johns Hopkins Aramco Healthcare, Aix Marseille University, and the University of Zürich has found that fans flocking to the World Cup in Qatar will be at risk of acquiring Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). In their paper published in the journal *New Microbes and New Infections*, Jaffar Al-Tawfiq, Philippe Gautret and Patricia Schlagenhauf, describe the risk posed by MERS and what visitors to the World Cup should do to help keep themselves infection-free.

World Cup 2022 is the first World Cup since the pandemic began. Health officials are concerned that the high attendance at the event might lead to an increase in COVID-19 infections around the world. Health officials have also noted that [visitors](#) will be at an increased risk of infection by monkeypox, as more than 1.5 million people are expected to attend 2022 FIFA World Cup. In this new effort, the researchers note that visitors will also face a third infection risk, a type of MERS that has come to be known as "camel flu," named in honor of its main carrier.

Camel flu, as its name suggests, infects camels,

which pass it on to humans. Like COVID-19, it is a type of coronavirus—it also has similar symptoms: fever, coughing and shortness of breath. The disease was first identified in Saudi Arabia in 2012 and has since killed approximately 2,600 people, mostly in Saudi Arabia.

In recent years, it has been slowly migrating to other countries in the Middle East, including Qatar. To date, just 28 cases have been diagnosed in the country hosting the World Cup. But what worries [health officials](#) is the large number of people traveling from other Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia, to the World Cup—a situation that could lead to a much wider and bigger outbreak.

Health officials are warning those who travel to Qatar to avoid not only direct contact with camels, but camel events, such as races. They also are warning visitors to avoid drinking camel milk (or urine) or eating camel meat. Visitors are also asked to quarantine themselves if they develop symptoms of any of the three types of infections.

**More information:** Jaffar A. Al-Tawfiq et al, Infection risks associated with the 2022 FIFA world cup in Qatar, *New Microbes and New Infections* (2022). [DOI: 10.1016/j.nmni.2022.101055](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nmni.2022.101055)

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