

DIPHThERIA

What is Diphtheria?

- Diphtheria is a very serious infection that can affect your nose and throat or skin. It is contagious and anyone who is not immunized can get diphtheria if exposed.
- Diphtheria is spread through the air by sneezing or coughing, or by skin to skin contact.
- Diphtheria was once one of the most common causes of death in Canadian children under the age of 5. Thanks to vaccines, less than 5 cases of diphtheria are now reported in Canada each year.

Signs and Symptoms of Diphtheria:

- Diphtheria in your nose and throat can cause breathing problems. Symptoms may include:
 - fever and chills
 - sore throat
 - swollen and sore lymph nodes in the neck
 - swelling of the neck
- Diphtheria can also cause infections on the skin that show up as rashes or ulcers.
- Diphtheria may also affect the nerves and heart.



What Happens to People who get Diphtheria?

- Diphtheria is treated with antibiotics and a diphtheria antitoxin may also be necessary.
- Babies and children are most at risk of being infected and developing complications.
- Even with treatment, diphtheria can be fatal in 1 in 10 cases.
- Close contacts of someone with diphtheria may also need antibiotics to prevent illness, even if they have been vaccinated.

How can Diphtheria be Prevented?

- The best way to prevent Diphtheria is to be immunized!

Children receive immunizations to protect them against diphtheria.

Adults need to receive a booster once every 10 years.

- Check with your Community Health Nurse to see if you and your family are up to date with your immunizations so you are protected against diphtheria.

Keep from Spreading Diphtheria:

- Make sure your immunizations are up to date!
- Stay home when you are sick
- Don't share anything with mouth or nasal secretions, including drinks, water bottles, eating utensils, lipstick, or cigarettes
- Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Keep skin wounds covered
- Wash your hands often with soap and water
- Clean and disinfect surfaces



What do I do if I think I have Diphtheria?

- If you think that you might have diphtheria, contact your Community Health Nurse or doctor. Call ahead so that they can plan to see you without exposing anyone else.
- Your doctor may take a swab of your nose and throat and/or skin lesion.
- Stay home from work, school, or daycare while taking treatment for diphtheria. You may need further testing before being able to return to work, school or daycare.

VACCINATION IS THE BEST PROTECTION AGAINST DIPHThERIA!

Adapted from <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/immunization/vaccine-preventable-diseases/diphtheria.html> and <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/diphtheria>