



**KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE**  
HEALTH  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

# DIPHTHERIA- FACT SHEET FOR THE PUBLIC

**“Protect your children now; vaccinate against vaccine preventable conditions”**

## What is diphtheria?

Diphtheria is a serious disease caused by a toxin (poison) made by bacteria. It causes a thick coating in the back of the nose or throat that makes it hard to breathe or swallow.

## What are the symptoms of diphtheria?

Diphtheria starts with a sore throat, mild fever and chills. Next, there is swelling of the throat followed by the diphtheria toxin making a thick coating on the back of the nose or throat and swelling of the neck. It may be white or greyish. The coating makes it hard to breathe or swallow.

## How does diphtheria spread?

Diphtheria spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes. A person can spread the disease for up to 2 weeks after infection.

## How to Prevent?

Yes through vaccination of children with diphtheria vaccine in combination with other vaccines (Pentavalent/Hexavalent) at the age of 6 weeks, 10 weeks, 14 weeks, 18 months, Td vaccine as booster dose at 6 years and 12 years. The vaccine is available for free in all the clinics. Doctors recommend that all children get the vaccine.

## Who is susceptible to the conditions that will emphasize the prevention?

Any person who is not vaccinated against diphtheria can get the disease and diphtheria mostly affects children, but any age group can be affected.

## What can be done should symptoms appear?

Go to the nearest clinic for assessment



KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health



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