

# Diphtheria

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## About Diphtheria

- Diphtheria is an infectious disease caused by the **bacterium *Corynebacterium diphtheria***.
- Diphtheria is a severe communicable and bacterial infectious disease that causes inflammation of the mucous membranes by forming a false membrane in the throat which creates a problem while swallowing food and during breathing.
- Currently, this syndrome is rare in developed countries.
- This disease spreads easily from one person to another but can be prevented by the use of vaccines.

## Symptoms of Diphtheria

- The signs of diphtheria appear in a short period of time within three to five days after the infection has occurred.

## The most common symptom

- Gray, thick covering on the tonsils and throat.

## Other usual symptoms include

- Fever.
- A loud cough.
- Swollen neck.
- A sore throat.
- Feeling discomfort.

## If the infection prolongs, further symptoms may develop.

- Difficulty in swallowing.
- Slurred speech.
- Sweating.

- Rapid heartbeat.
- Redness and ulcers in the affected region.

## **Risk factors**

People who are at increased risk of contracting diphtheria include

- Children and adults who don't have up-to-date vaccinations
- People living in crowded or unsanitary conditions
- Anyone who travels to an area where diphtheria infections are more common

## **Complications**

Left untreated, diphtheria can lead to:

- Breathing problems.
- Heart damage.
- Nerve damage.

## **Prevention**

- Today, the disease is not only treatable but also preventable with a vaccine.
- The diphtheria vaccine is usually combined with vaccines for tetanus and whooping cough (pertussis).
- The three-in-one vaccine is known as the diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccine.
- The latest version of this vaccine is known as the DTaP vaccine for children and the Tdap vaccine for adolescents and adults.

Vaccination consists of a series of five shots, typically administered in the arm or thigh, given to children at these ages:

- 2 months
- 4 months

- 6 months
- 15 to 18 months
- 4 to 6 years