



# PUBLIC FACT SHEET

## DIPHTHERIA

### What is diphtheria?

Diphtheria is a disease caused by a bacteria which affects the tonsils, throat, nose or skin.

### How is diphtheria spread?

Diphtheria may be spread to others through close contact with droplets from an infected person's nose, throat, skin, eyes and skin sores.

### What are possible symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- Sore throat
- Grayish white membrane in the back of the throat
- Chills
- Fever
- Swollen glands in the neck
- Skin sores

### How is diphtheria diagnosed?

By an examination (identification of grayish white membrane in the back of the throat) and by laboratory tests.

### What is the treatment for diphtheria?

Antibiotics and diphtheria antitoxin.

### How can I prevent diphtheria?

Vaccine is available to prevent diphtheria. The vaccine should normally be given at 2, 4, 6 and 15-18 months of age, and between 4-6 years of age. The immunity decreases over time, so it is important for adults to get a booster every 10 years.

### For more information on diphtheria:

Ottawa County Health Department

[www.miOttawa.org](http://www.miOttawa.org)

Medline Plus/National Institutes of Health

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/001608.htm>