

DIPHTHERIA

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

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

What is diphtheria?

Diphtheria is a serious disease caused by a toxin (poison) made by a 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. The coating may be white or greyish.

How does diphtheria spread?

Diphtheria spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes. A person can spread the disease for up to two weeks after infection. Prolonged close contact is necessary for the infection to be spread.

How can it be prevented?

Through vaccination of children with diphtheria vaccine, in combination with other vaccines (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 Western Cape health facilities. It is recommended that all children get the vaccine.**

Who is at risk?

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

What can be done if symptoms appear?

Please visit your nearest health facility urgently for assessment. If diphtheria is suspected – laboratory tests will be done.

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