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URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/diphtheria.html>

Diphtheria

Diphtheria is a serious bacterial infection. You can catch it from a person who has the infection and coughs or sneezes. You can also get infected by coming in contact with an object, such as a toy, that has bacteria on it.

Diphtheria usually affects the nose and throat. Symptoms include:


- Sore throat
- Swollen glands in the neck
- Fever
- Weakness

Your doctor will diagnose it based on your signs and symptoms and a lab test. Getting treatment for diphtheria quickly is important. If your doctor suspects that you have it, you'll start treatment before the lab tests come back. Treatment is with antibiotics.


The diphtheria, pertussis, and tetanus vaccine [<https://medlineplus.gov/tetanusdiphtheriaandpertussisvaccines.html>] can prevent diphtheria, but its protection does not last forever. Children need another dose, or booster, at about age 12. Then, as adults, they should get a booster every 10 years. Diphtheria is very rare in the United States because of the vaccine.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Learn More

- **About Diphtheria** [<https://www.cdc.gov/diphtheria/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/diphtheria/es/about/acerca-de-la-difteria.html>]
- **Diphtheria** [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001608.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001608.htm>]
- **Diphtheria Photos** [<https://www.vaccineinformation.org/photos/diphtheria/>] (Immunization Action Coalition)
- **Diphtheria Symptoms and Complications** [<https://www.cdc.gov/diphtheria/symptoms/>]
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/diphtheria/es/symptoms/sintomas-y-complicaciones-de-la-difteria.html>]
- **Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis Vaccines: MedlinePlus Health Topic**
[<https://medlineplus.gov/tetanusdiphtheriaandpertussisvaccines.html>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/tetanusdiphtheriaandpertussisvaccines.html>]

Clinical Trials

- **ClinicalTrials.gov: Diphtheria** [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Diphtheria%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]
 (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

- Article: Autochthonous outbreak of respiratory diphtheria caused by *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*, Germany, September...
[<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40642771>]
- Article: Global burden of diphtheria, 1990-2021: a 204-country analysis of socioeconomic inequality...
[<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40620556>]
- Article: Protective antibodies against diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis following revaccination in children...
[<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40597356>]
- Diphtheria -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Diphtheria%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]



National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Diphtheria* is the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases
[<http://www.niaid.nih.gov/>]

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