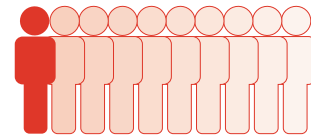


What is Diphtheria?

Diphtheria is a serious and contagious bacterial infection caused by strains of bacteria called *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*.

The bacteria infect the upper airways of the respiratory system (nose and throat) and release a toxin that makes us sick. The bacteria can also infect the skin.

In severe cases, diphtheria can lead to heart and nerve damage, and can cause breathing difficulties and suffocation in young children.



Death occurs in about **1 out of 10** cases, with most deaths occurring in very young children and elderly persons who are unimmunized.



Diphtheria is spread through close contact with others, such as coughing or sneezing next to someone, and sharing personal items such as drinks and cutlery.

Persons of any age can catch the disease. However, it is most serious in infants and very young children.

Diphtheria vaccines are safe and the most effective way to protect against diphtheria infection.

The diphtheria vaccine is combined with other vaccines – commonly tetanus and pertussis vaccines – which means that you get protection against multiple diseases in one shot.



Talk to your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or local public health office about getting the vaccine for you or your child.