

# What is diphtheria?

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

## It is spread through close contact with others.

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.

**Getting immunized against diphtheria is the best way to protect against it.**

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

