

All contacts should be given information on diphtheria

This can be downloaded online:

[https://www.ahcwa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/HW\\_DiphtheriaFlyer\\_MAR26.pdf](https://www.ahcwa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/HW_DiphtheriaFlyer_MAR26.pdf)

Printed flyers will also be sent to all ACCHS in the Kimberley, Pilbara and Goldfields

Three contact information sheets are provided below. Print the correct sheet for each contact (high-, medium- or low-risk) and fill in the relevant phone numbers.

**How is Diphtheria spread?**

Without treatment, infected people can spread diphtheria to others for more than four weeks from when their symptoms first start.

Diphtheria is spread by infected droplets from coughs or sneezes.

Diphtheria can be spread skin to skin, from contact with an infected ulcer or sore.

You can get sick by touching dirty sheets, towels, clothes, or household items.

**Prevention**

Vaccination is the best protection against diphtheria.

- The diphtheria vaccine has been around for more than 100 years! It is safe and free for everyone.
- Children get protected from their childhood needles – make sure kids are up to date with vaccines.
- Adults need a booster every five to 10 years.
- Where diphtheria is spreading, people may be recommended to have an extra booster if they haven't had one in the last 12 months.

**Get Diphtheria Outta Here!**

Skin sores or sore throat? See your clinic.

**Good hygiene habits help keep mob healthy**

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**Diphtheria (diff-THEER-e-uh) is a contagious skin or throat infection, caused by a nasty type of bacteria (germ) that can release a toxin (poison) which can make you very sick.**

**Symptoms**

Symptoms depend on the site of infection, and whether the bacteria produces toxin.

**Skin (cutaneous) diphtheria**

The most common diphtheria causes skin infections.

- Non-healing skin sores and ulcers, mainly on the legs.

**Throat (respiratory) diphtheria**

The most severe type of diphtheria is a toxin infection in the throat.

- Sore throat, fever and chills.
- Hard to swallow and breathe.
- Grey-white coating on the throat and tonsils.
- Swollen, painful glands in neck.
- Tiredness, not feeling hungry.

**Complications**

If not treated quickly, toxin-producing diphtheria can enter the bloodstream from a throat infection and damage other parts of the body.

This can lead to:

- damage to the heart
- damage to the nerves causing weakness, choking and difficulty breathing
- long stays in hospital
- death (in severe cases).

**Get Diphtheria Outta Here!**

Skin sores or sore throat? See your clinic.

**Treatment**

Your doctor or nurse will diagnose diphtheria by testing a swab taken from the infected throat or sore.

- Diphtheria is treated with antibiotics.
- If you have a throat infection you might need special medicine.
- People with severe throat infections may need treatment in hospital.
- People recovering from diphtheria may need a booster jab.

**Keep mob safe**

It's up to you to stop the spread of diphtheria!

- Come see the doctor if you have a skin sore or sore throat.
- Keep your sores covered and take all your antibiotics.
- If you have a sore throat avoid contact with others. No kissing until you're better!
- Keep an eye on your mob at home. Check their skin for sores and get them to come see the doctor.
- Ask clinic mob if you need a booster vaccination
- Vaccination is the best way to keep mob safe.

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# How to protect yourself and your community when you've been around someone with diphtheria



High-Risk Contact

- Watch for a **sore throat or any skin sores** for the next 7 days. See your clinic quick if you get a sore throat or skin sores.
- Your clinic might ask to do a **nose and throat swab** to check for diphtheria – the results can take a few days to a week or so to come back.
- Take **antibiotics** each day for 5 days as instructed by your clinic – this helps to stop you getting diphtheria and stops you passing it onto others.
- Have a booster diphtheria **vaccine** at your clinic. The clinic will check when you last had one, and give you a booster if you haven't had it in the last year – this helps protect you from getting diphtheria in the future.
- Stay away from babies, sick or frail people, and old people until you have finished at least 3 days of antibiotics or your swab test comes back negative. This might mean not going to school, childcare, or work if you work with vulnerable people.

If you have questions, call your clinic (Ph: \_\_\_\_\_)  
or the local public health unit (Ph: \_\_\_\_\_)

You can also call Healthdirect Australia on 1800 022 222

# How to protect yourself and your community when you've been around someone with diphtheria



Medium-Risk Contact

- Watch for a **sore throat or any skin sores** for the next 7 days. See your clinic quick if you get a sore throat or skin sores.
- Take **antibiotics** each day for 5 days as instructed by your clinic –this helps to stop you getting diphtheria and stops you passing it onto others.
- Have a booster diphtheria **vaccine** at your clinic. The clinic will check when you last had one, and give you a booster if you haven't had it in the last year – this helps protect you from getting diphtheria in the future.
- Stay away from babies, sick or frail people, and old people until you have finished at least 3 days of antibiotics. This might mean not going to school, childcare, or work if you work with vulnerable people.

If you have questions, call your clinic (Ph: \_\_\_\_\_)  
or the local public health unit (Ph: \_\_\_\_\_)

You can also call Healthdirect Australia on 1800 022 222

# How to protect yourself and your community when you've been around someone with diphtheria

- Watch for a **sore throat or any skin sores** for the next 7 days. See your clinic quick if you get a sore throat or skin sores.
- Have a booster diphtheria **vaccine** at your clinic. The clinic will check when you last had one, and give you a booster if you haven't had it in the five years – this helps protect you from getting diphtheria in the future.



Low-Risk Contact

If you have questions, call your clinic (Ph: \_\_\_\_\_)  
or the local public health unit (Ph: \_\_\_\_\_)

You can also call Healthdirect Australia on 1800 022 222